



WALKIN' THE WABASH

AN EXPLORATION INTO THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN WEST CENTRAL INDIANA

By

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and Berky Davis**

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UNDERGROUND RAILROAD ROUTES THROUGH INDIANA

Circa mid-1800s according to findings of William Seibert



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INTRODUCTION

*The needs of our destiny are nurtured by
The roots of our past.*

Author Unknown

In the struggle to survive, people have always been drawn to rivers for a variety of reasons, be it economical, military, political or as a food lifeline. Native American tribes called the rivers "the source" so that it stands to reason that slaves fleeing through western Indiana would logically use the "Ouabache" to guide them to a new "source" of life — freedom. The Underground Railroad (UGRR) — a railroad without any physical rails and a migration without maps and signposts — is known to have passed through the Wabash Valley, an important route in the 35 years of its operation in the Hoosier state.

The Wabash River had been the main source of transportation for Native Americans, the French traders, the British and land-hungry Colonials. When Governor William Henry Harrison led his forces north from Vincennes to meet Tecumseh in the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, his line of march created the northward paths that would again come into use a few decades later. In the 1820's counties of western Indiana were established and communities cropped up along the banks and tributaries of the Wabash. Steamboat movement became common, boosting the travel of people and cargo.

At the same time, the success of the Erie Canal in New York State brought about cries for a similar creation in Indiana. Beginning construction in February, 1839, in Fort Wayne, the canal reached Lafayette by 1843, Terre Haute by 1849 and Evansville by 1853. At completion, the 460 miles from Toledo, Ohio to Evansville, Indiana, made the Wabash & Erie Canal the longest man-made body of water ever built in America. This great achievement brought great expectations of increased commerce and population, but the greatest good some now believe the canal achieved, can not be counted in the dollar value of

cargo, but in the lives that may have been saved as fugitive slaves traveled its towpaths to freedom during the still of the night.

There is also speculation that the National Road that crossed the state east to west connected stations along the UGRR in a common bond. This belief becomes plausible when you track the movements of such notables as Levi Coffin, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, Rev. William Paul Quinn and the Revels brothers, Rev. Hiram and Rev. Willis as they traveled the state touting their respective missions.

Certainly the three principal UGRR routes through Indiana ran north and south. Much is known about the eastern route, which followed the Ohio River northward. The central route is also relatively well-known. But the western route along the banks of the Wabash is still somewhat of a mystery. When compared to maps outlining the routes of the Underground Railroad in Indiana, the locations of known free African-American settlements at Lyles Station in Gibson County, Lost Creek in Vigo County and Bethel in Fountain County¹ lend credence to the basis that migrants blended in with the communities, assisting their brethren on the path following the North Star.²

They were also guided through the known pockets of supportive Quaker settlements through out the valley, or assisted by Native Americans, who also had a common desire to be free and not under the control of others. These ties of kinship and common associations, such as the various religious groups, also fostered contacts with others of their race to spur them northward.

The most intriguing feature of the Underground Railroad in Indiana was the lack of organization. This was not a "pay your dues and enjoy membership with a monthly newsletter" type of group. A knock on the door or footsteps scurrying in the middle of the

night could be a plea for assistance or a clap of irons on wrists for aiding and abetting — leading to fines, ostracism from family and neighbors and even possible imprisonment.

The movement was basically made up of individuals from various ethnic and religious affiliations and all walks of life who believed in a common idea — that no man should endure the bonds of slavery. Thus, they did not want their deeds known for their own protection and the safety of their families. Agents hid or destroyed journals to protect themselves and the runaways. Thus the total number aided to freedom, or where they stayed during their journey may never be known because of the secrecy that surrounded the movement.

While this is but a brief attempt to shed some light on a dark enigma in Hoosier history, it also leads to new questions and interest in tracing the roots of a network to freedom within the Wabash River Valley — a curious mystery of reality and imagination.

¹ *Indiana Junior Historian*, February, 1993, cover

² *Black History News & Notes*, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, August, 1999



CONNECTIONS

joining or fastening together,

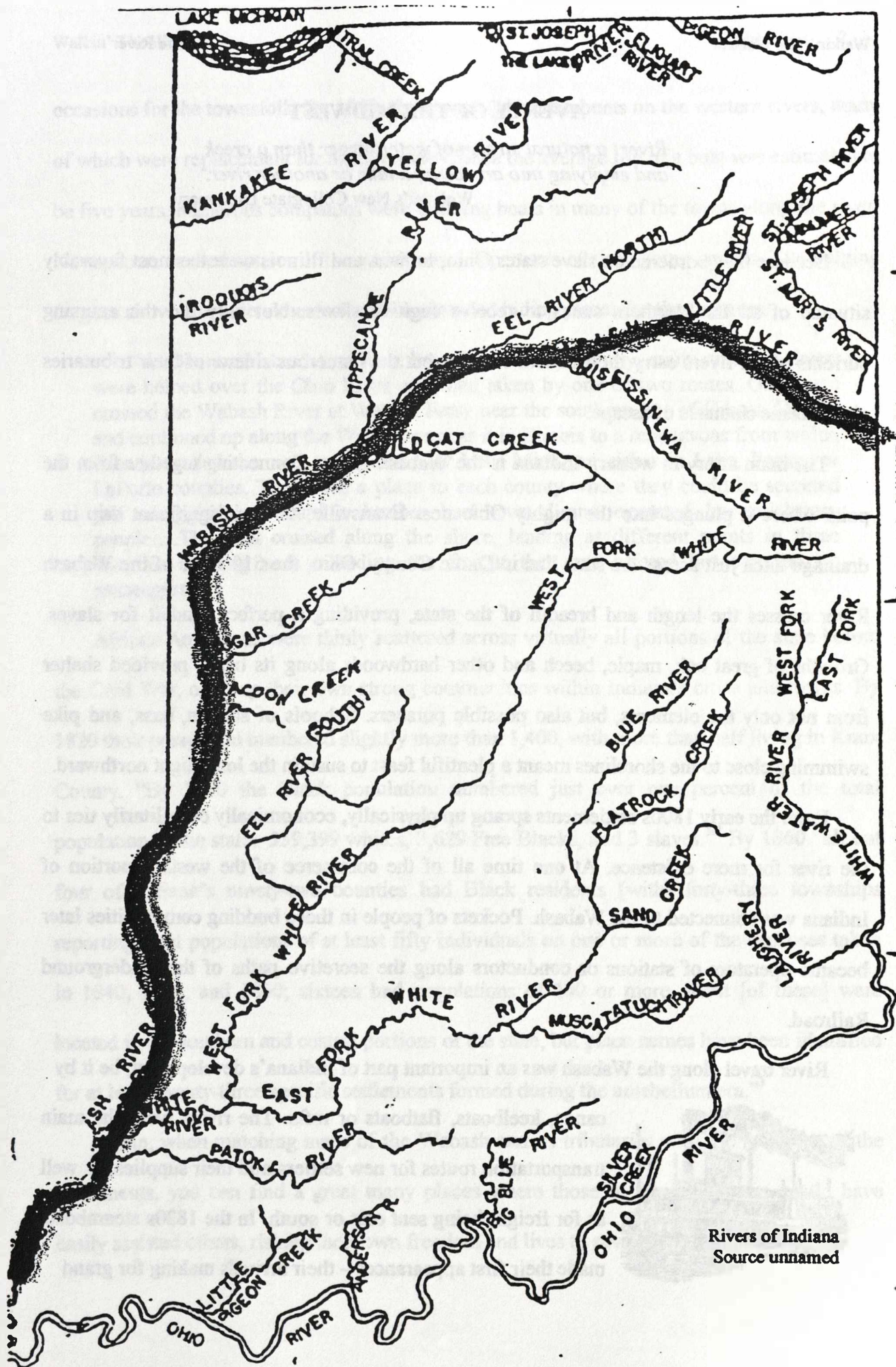
usually by something intervening;

means of communication or transport;

being connected with others, especially by marriage,

kinship or common interest.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary



Rivers of Indiana
Source unnamed

AVENUE OF THE MIDWEST

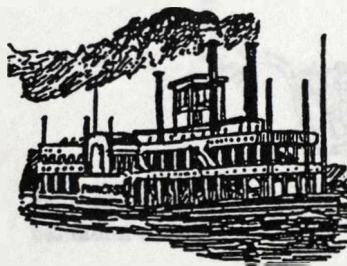
River: a natural stream of water larger than a creek and emptying into an ocean, a lake or another river.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

Because they bordered on slave states Ohio, Indiana and Illinois were the most favorably situated of all the Northern states to receive fugitive slaves. Not only did the coursing currents of the rivers carry the freedom seekers, but the numerous sinews of their tributaries also became channels of escape.

The main artery in western Indiana is the Wabash River. Connecting together from the point where it plunges into the mighty Ohio near Evansville, to an insignificant drip in a drainage ditch just across the state line in Darke County, Ohio, the 510 miles of the Wabash River crosses the length and breadth of the state, providing a perfect conduit for slaves. Growths of great oak, maple, beech and other hardwoods along its banks provided shelter from not only the elements, but also possible pursuers. Schools of salmon, bass, and pike swimming close to the shorelines meant a plentiful feast to sustain the long flight northward.

From the early 1800s settlements sprang up physically, economically or militarily tied to the river for mere existence. At one time all of the commerce of the western portion of Indiana was connected to the Wabash. Pockets of people in these budding communities later became operators of stations or conductors along the secretive paths of the Underground Railroad.



River travel along the Wabash was an important part of Indiana's development, be it by canoe, keelboats, flatboats or rafts. The rivers were the main transportation routes for new settlers and their supplies, as well as for freight being sent east or south. In the 1820s steamboats made their first appearances – their arrivals making for grand

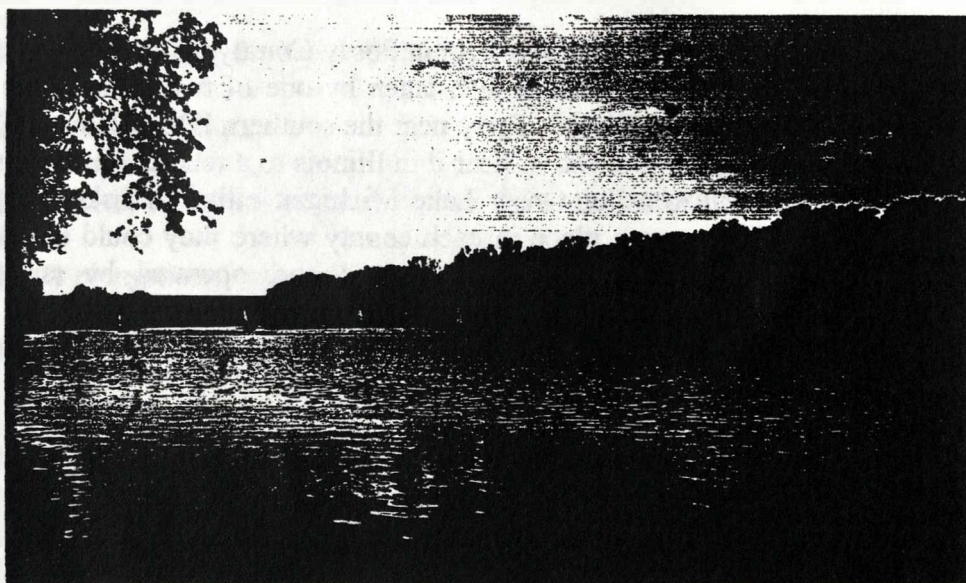
occasions for the townsfolk. By 1850, there were 740 steamboats on the western rivers, many of which were replacement for older vessels. Since the average life of a boat was estimated to be five years, numerous companies were building boats in many of the towns along the river. Newspapers carried notices of the arrivals and departures of river-going vessels. The bulging cargoes above and below the decks often provided hiding places for the fugitives.

"At Diamond Island near West Franklin in Posey County, many runaway slaves were helped over the Ohio River and then taken by one of two routes. One route crossed the Wabash River at Webb's Ferry near the southern line of Gibson County and continued up along the Wabash or near it in Illinois to a rendezvous from which friends carried them on to a point near Lake Michigan either in Lake, Porter, or LaPorte counties. There was a place in each county where they could be secreted and smuggled on board a lumber bark owned and operated by antislavery people....The boat cruised along the shore, landing at different points in three counties, loading and unloading the freight that was offered but carrying no passengers."¹

African Americans were thinly scattered across virtually all portions of the state before the Civil War, creating their own strong communities within Indiana's cities and towns. By 1820 their population numbered slightly more than 1,400, with more than half living in Knox County. "By 1830 the Black population numbered just over one percent of the total population of the state: 339,399 whites, 3,629 Free Blacks, and 3 slaves."² By 1860 "all but four of Indiana's ninety-two counties had Black residents [with] forty-three townships reporting rural populations of at least fifty individuals on one or more of the censuses taken in 1840, 1850, and 1860; sixteen had populations of 100 or more. Most [of these] were located in the southern and central portions of the state, but place names have been identified for at least twenty-three specific settlements formed during the antebellum era."³

Again, when matching maps of the Wabash and its tributaries with the locations of the settlements, you can find a great many places where those in the settlements could have easily assisted others, risking their own freedom and lives to save their fellow man.

The Wabash was the lifeblood for anyone who ventured into the vast expanse it traversed. Even though they faced deadly snakes, panthers and a host of other dangers, the fugitives still knew the river to offer fast passage to freedom. It was the highway for man in both coming and going out of the state. It connected man to the "outer world" and fellow man. It sustained life, for those who were free and those who wished to be.



The Wabash River at Terre Haute
Photo by Berky Davis

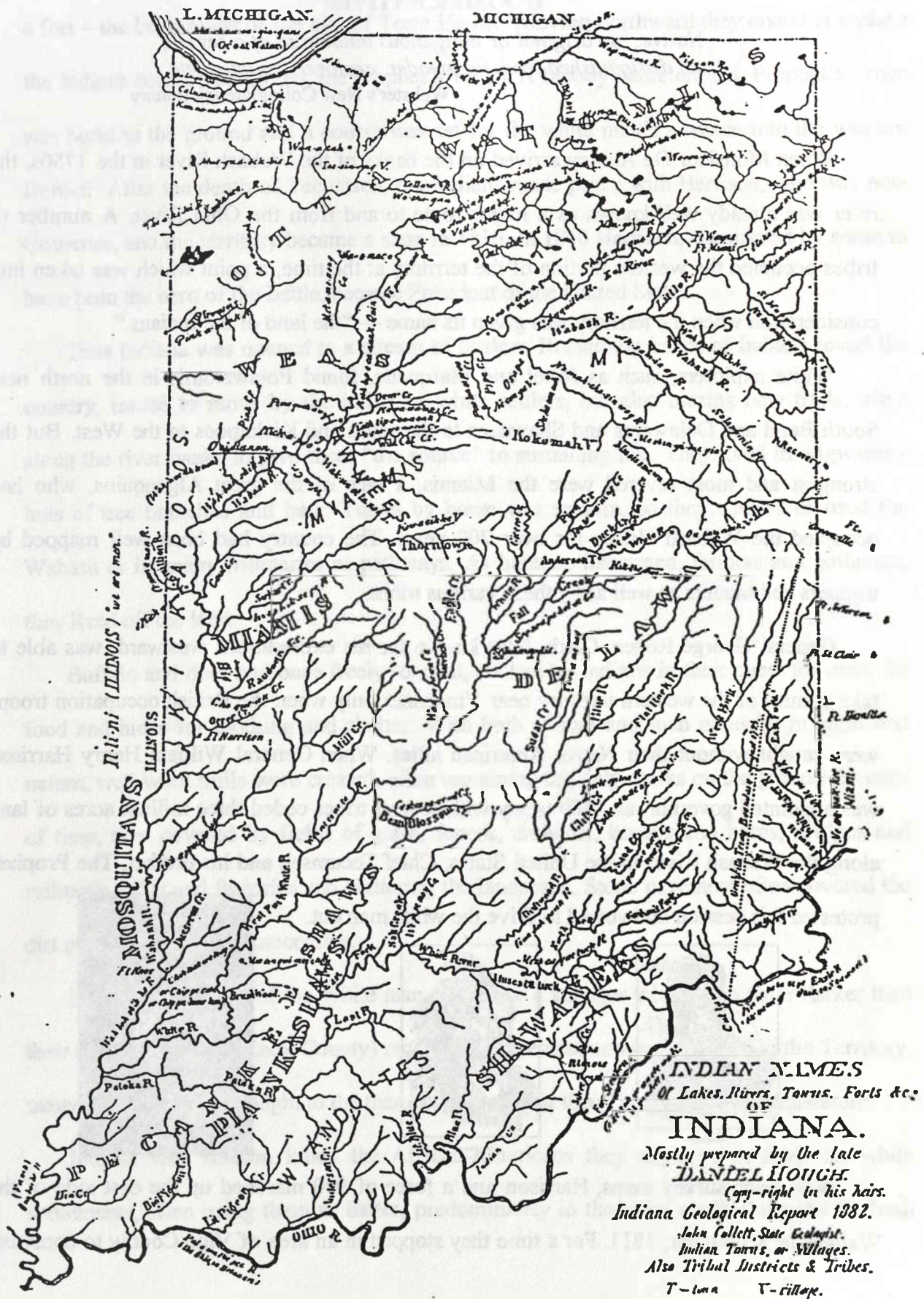
¹ Charles Blockson. *The Underground Railroad*. (Prentice Hall Press, New York, 1987) 204

² Gwendolyn Crenshaw. *Bury Me in a Free Land: The Abolitionist Movement in Indiana, 1816-1865*. (3rd printing, Indianapolis, 1993) 12

³ *Black History News & Notes* #80, Indiana Historical Society. Indianapolis, May, 2000.

EARLY SETTLERS OF THE WABASH VALLEY

By Sanford C. Cox (date unknown)



Map showing disposition of Indian tribes before Clark's conquest, according to Daniel Hough.

HOOSIER NATIVES

*Native: an original or indigenous inhabitant of a region,
as distinguished from an invader, explorer, colonist, etc.*

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

When Monsieur De Aubrey arrived on the banks of the Wabash River in the 1750s, the river was already well-known as a major route to and from the Ohio River. A number of tribes occupied the western portion of the territory at the time, a point which was taken into consideration when the territory was given its name — “the land of the Indians.”

White explorers, such as Joliet and Marquette, found Potawatomis in the north near South Bend and Delawares and Shawnees to the south and Kickapoos to the West. But the strongest and most revered were the Miamis, a race of the great Algonquins, who had occupied the Wabash Valley for over 200 years. The country had been well mapped by trappers and hunters as well as by these various tribes.

General George Rogers Clark, later known for his explorations westward, was able to take control of the western territory near Vincennes only when the British occupation troops were caught without their Native American allies. When General William Henry Harrison was appointed governor, an 1809 treaty with several tribes ceded three million acres of land along the Wabash River to the United States. Chief Tecumseh and his brother, The Prophet, protested this cession and vowed to drive the white man out.



Tecumseh



THE PROPHET



With early survey maps, Harrison and a force of 900 marched up the east side of the Wabash in September, 1811. For a time they stopped in an area of Vigo County to construct

a fort – the beginnings of the city of Terre Haute. Moving northward they ended at a place the Indians considered sacred, the Prophet's Town. A bloody battle ensued, Prophet's Town was burnt to the ground and a course was set for the white man's advance into the western frontier. After the death of Tecumseh, the Indians made peace with Harrison, who was now Governor, and the territory became a state in 1816. In 1840 Harrison, considered by some to have been the hero of the battle, became President of the United States.

Thus Indiana was opened to a stream of settlers. Remaining bands of Indians roved the country, forced to move by the influx of white settlers, but also blazing new trails, often along the river banks to give them "the source" to sustaining life. They lived in wigwams - huts of tree branches and bark. Travel by horse was seldom, so they walked or used the Wabash or its many tributaries as pathways. As hunters, fishermen, farmers and gatherers, they lived off the land.

Buffalo and deer had once freely roamed, stalked by Indians in their quest for meat for food and hides for clothing and shelter. With both animal and man nomadic in habit and nature, well-worn trails were created, often remaining the only marks on the ground for eons of time, now covered by fields of grain, fences, orchards, houses and barns, bridges and railroads, mills and factories and cluttering the landscape. Stone pavement often covered the dirt paths once tread by moccasins.

But with the influx of the White man also came a stranger with a skin color darker than their own. Vincennes (Knox County) recorded the greatest number of slaves in the Territory, many of whom were brought to the then capital to assist their "masters" in the legislature.

Indians very seldom killed the African-Americans they captured in raids on white settlements, often using them as barter, predominately in the areas north along the Wabash

River.¹ Although they took these new strangers as slaves into their tribes in such barter or as battle trophies, these native Hoosiers also recognized something was different about these dark strangers. Many had also fled from the white man, and in this the Indian recognized a love of freedom carried within and almost equal to their own. Although the Indian may have been born in the wild, unlike those running from the sheltered life on a plantation, he knew he would not be a slave willingly.

Thus, many fugitive slaves made their way north, following the paths created by moccasin-clad feet, some even integrating into the various riverfront tribes until escape from the white man was clear. In some cases, these captured slaves became so immersed into tribal society, that they may not have sought to move on.² Today, many African-Americans born in Indiana can trace some of their lineage to those native Hoosiers.³

A common denominator that seems to exist between the natives of Indiana and the fugitive slaves is that goal to remain as free as the eagle that soared along the crags of the river banks. It was not an option – the love of liberty was revered more than life and this belief never faltered.



Drawings of Tecumseh, The Prophet and Indian Tepee from *Historical Sketches of Montezuma, Indiana*, Compiled and Edited by Richard M. Wheeler, 1997

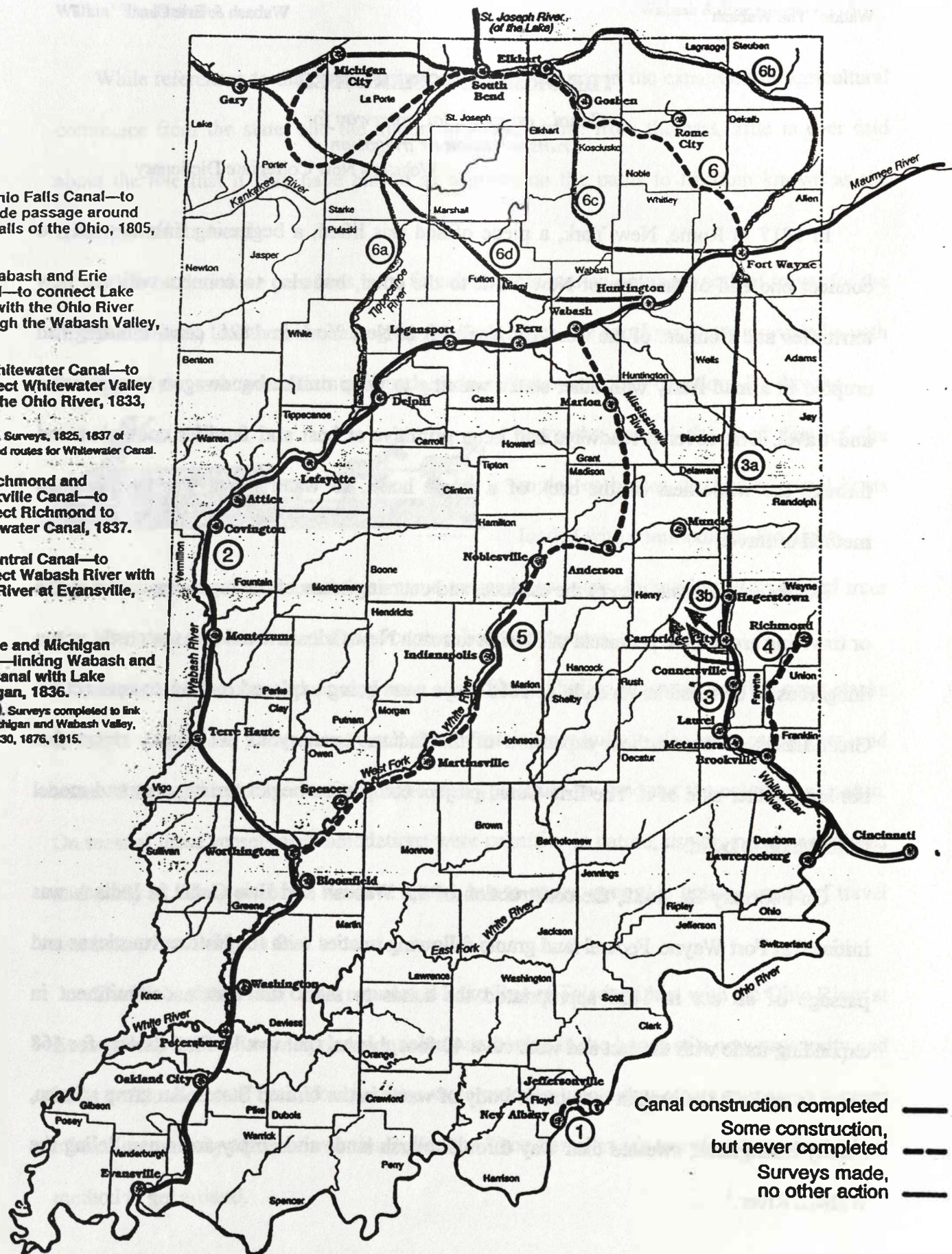
Photo of William Henry Harrison taken from *Bury Me In A Free Land* by Gwendolyn Crenshaw. 1993

¹ Crenshaw, *Bury Me in A Free Land*, 8-9

² Emma Lou Thornbrough. *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*. (1st Edition, Indiana University Press. Bloomington, 1993) 3

³ Oral history: conversation with Mrs. Bettie Davis

- ① Ohio Falls Canal—to provide passage around the Falls of the Ohio, 1805, 1816.
- ② Wabash and Erie Canal—to connect Lake Erie with the Ohio River through the Wabash Valley, 1827.
- ③ Whitewater Canal—to connect Whitewater Valley with the Ohio River, 1833, 1836.
- ④a-④c. Surveys, 1825, 1837 of proposed routes for Whitewater Canal.
- ④ Richmond and Brookville Canal—to connect Richmond to Whitewater Canal, 1837.
- ⑤ Central Canal—to connect Wabash River with Ohio River at Evansville, 1836.
- ⑥ Erie and Michigan Canal—linking Wabash and Erie Canal with Lake Michigan, 1836.
- ⑥a-⑥d. Surveys completed to link Lake Michigan and Wabash Valley, 1829, 1830, 1876, 1915.



THE GREAT HOOSIER DITCH

*Canal: an artificial waterway for
Transportation or irrigation*

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

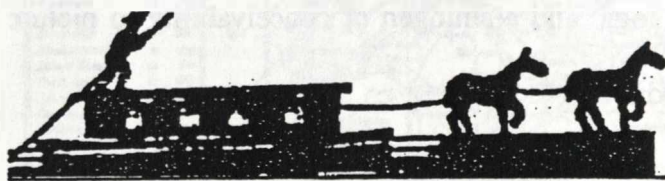
In 1817 in Rome, New York, a piece of sod was lifted, a beginning link, not only to connect one end of the state of New York to the other, but also to connect with the new territories and frontiers of the west. By its finish in New York in 1825, canal building had erupted in a mad flurry with other states wanting to jump on the bandwagon to commerce and travel. Dirt covered roadways had been primitive at best and families couldn't travel through the wilderness on the back of a single horse, so water travel was the optimum method of travel.

But travel time was also of the essence, and coursing some of the raging mountain rivers or traveling around the peninsula of Florida to reach New Orleans would be too costly or too dangerous to be feasible. As early as 1805 ways were being explored on how to connect the Great Lakes of the northern expansion of the Indiana territory to the mighty rivers that bordered either side of it. The Erie Canal project completion began the impetus and model from which to build.

On February 22, 1832, the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal in Indiana was initiated at Fort Wayne. Federal land grants following treaties with the Native Americans and passage of an act in 1836 appropriated the funds to mark the state's commitment in expanding trade with the east and west via a 40 foot channel that would wind its way for 468 miles to make it the longest man-made body of water in the United States. An army of men, mainly immigrants, sweated their way through marsh lands and empty areas paralleling the Wabash River.¹

While references to the canal attribute to its importance in the expansion of agricultural commerce from the state, and the import of merchandise from the east, little is ever said about the role that it may have played as a guide on the paths to freedom known as the Underground Railroad.

While no definitive proof has been found that this was an optimum path of travel for the freedom-seekers, like the travel along the Wabash River, the canal may have provided a path for fugitive slaves to go north into Canada and a new way of life — freedom. By day the



towpaths carried the shod feet of the mules or horses that pulled canal boats loaded with commodities. By night

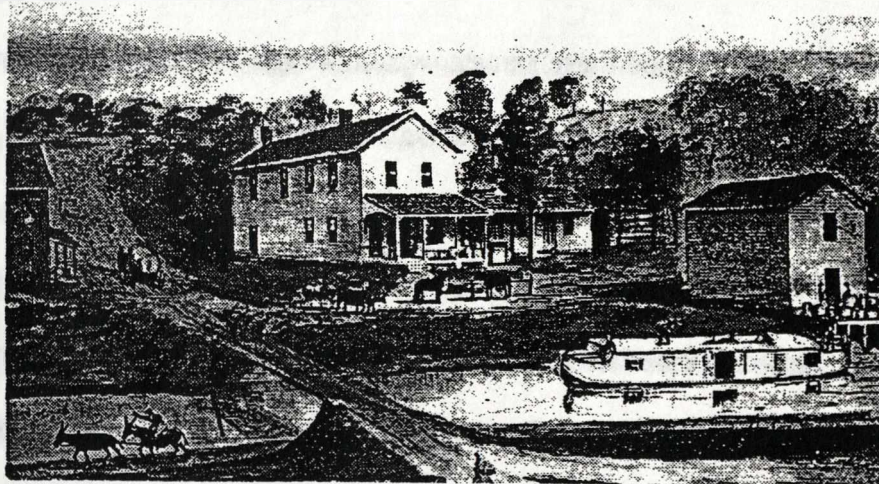
fugitive slaves could have used these same towpaths as roads, hiding in the brush and trees that lined the canal when the threat of capture became apparent.

The canal boats themselves may have also afforded hiding places among the great stacks of cargo. Long, low, narrow structures, these vessels were built to also carry passengers, and some of the captains only cared about the cash you could pay and not the color of your skin. On most of these vessels accommodations were primitive in nature, usually poorly ventilated and dimly lit. They were not built for speed, but to some, even this tedious mode of travel was better than being on foot.

The Wabash and Erie Canal connected Lake Erie at Toledo, Ohio, with the Ohio River at Evansville in 1853. Towns sprouted up along its banks, in the hopes of a new prosperity and lease on life. Some of these communities were more fortunate than others to make a success of their community after an invention called the “iron horse” made traveling by train the best method to get around.

When movement along the Underground Railroad was supposedly at its highest peak in the decades before the Civil War, activity on the Wabash and Erie Canal had begun to ebb. Floods, vandalism by those opposed to the canal and the influx of the railroads started taking its toll on the business of the Canal. This inactivity, of course, may have made it easier for the fugitive slaves to use the pathways to move north.

The Wabash and Erie Canal ceased operations in 1874, a decade after activity along the Underground Railroad ended. When one looks at the route of the canal with the known paths of UGRR activity, it only takes a bit of logic and a smidgen of conceivability to picture a flight to freedom along the great Hoosier ditch.



Canal Scene from *Historical Sketches of Montezuma, Indiana*, compiled and edited by Richard M. Wheeler

¹ "Canal Mania in Indiana," *The Indiana Historian*, Indiana Historical Society. (Indianapolis, June, 1997) 4

STEAM BOAT ROUTES.	
Louisville to Pittsburg	
Wayport	23
Albion	31
Port William	35
Tracy	40
Lawrenceburg	51
Lawrenceburg	51
Cincinnati	54
New Richmond	55
Point Pleasant	58
Moscow	64
Augusta	73
Ripley	81
Marysville	89
Albion	98
Portsmouth	105
Burlington	112
Gallipolis	117
Point Pleasant	120
Lebanon	124
Belle	129
Porter	134
Marietta	140
Whiting	149
Warrenton	158
Wellburg	164
Stevensville	171
Lawrenceburg	174
Boonville	177
Wellington	180
Pittsburg	183
Louisville to New Orleans	
Northampton	17
Lawrenceburg	33
Rockport	53
Owensburg	8
Evansville	35
Madisonville	11
Mount Vernon	11
Carthage	12
Shawneetown	19
Cave in Rock	20
Rockhaven	7
Cumbarland Riv.	34
Smithland	1
Tennessee River	10
Wilmington	15
Memphis	11
Mississippi River	11
New Madrid	65
Little Prairie	30
Memphis	119
Arkansas River	171
Tombkins	137
Walnut Hills	147
Point Pleasant	147
Kanawha	69
Fort Adams	63
St. Francisville	80
Baton Rouge	131
New Orleans	131

EXPLANATION.

Canals

Railroads

D in progress

D Proposed

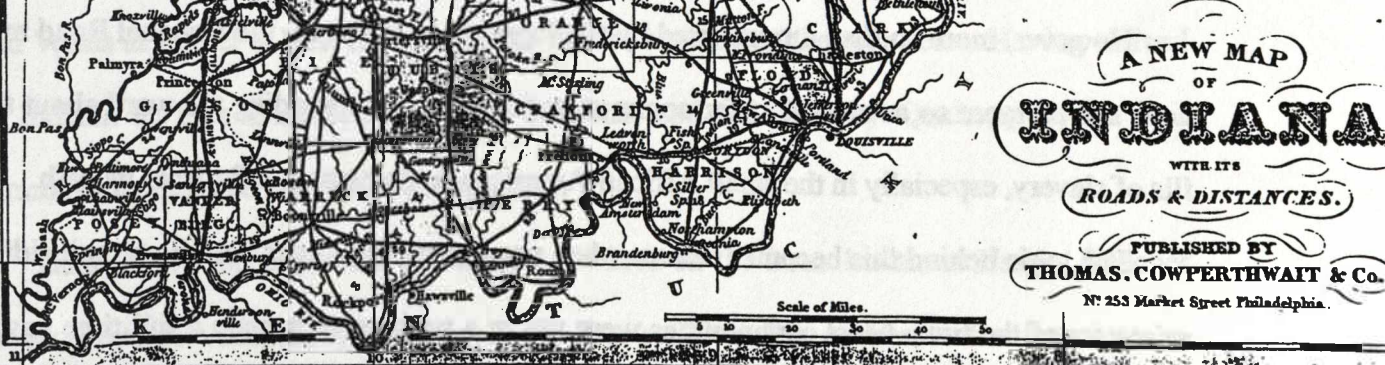
Flank Roads

Distances from Town to Town are noted along the Routes thus — 10 — the dots after the Figures indicate the quarters.

State Capital

County Towns

Common Do.



A SCENIC BYWAY

*Road: A way made for traveling between places,
esp. distant places.*

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

The creation of a route from Baltimore to the Mississippi River was proposed by the nation's first president and undertaken by a young, newly independent government that had also been weakened by war and sought to reach out for the new wealth thought to be in the wild western frontiers.¹ It was to be designed to enable Easterners to go west and the frontier folks to reach the nation's capital. Embankments were built, grades were thrown up across swamps and bogs and wooden covered bridges spanned waterways so, section by section, the National Road came together to be the country's first interstate highway.

The state of Indiana took prompt action to join in what would be the first federally funded and constructed road in America and by the late 1830s a completed road crossed the state from Richmond on its eastern boarder to Terre Haute on its west. Towns cropped up and an influx of Easterners moved west.

When railroads later began to surpass the Road's importance in connecting towns and moving people, it is plausible that the National Road, like the Wabash and Erie Canal, became a more feasible route for escaping slaves to use as a guide, bypassing those sections that operated on tolls or where bounty hunters may be lurking in wait.

However, more so than a route used by the fugitives to freedom, the National Road may have served more so as a conduit for communication by those spreading the word about the ills of slavery, especially in the small African-American settlements not far from its path.

The logic behind this becomes clearer when you equate the routes used by circuit-riding ministers of the time. Most communities were not in a position to sustain a full time pastor and possibly his family, and so had to share their men of the cloth. Names such as Coffin,

Revels, Quinn and Beecher crop up often when researching religious activity during the period the Underground Railroad was in operation. These men, known to be sympathetic to the anti-slavery cause, may have been spreading more than the word of the Good Book as they traversed the state, thus furthering the idea of freedom for all into settlements and towns they visited.

This seems even more plausible since the Society of Friends selected a place along the Road at Plainfield to hold their annual meetings. As a sect that was staunchly against slavery, many of the prominent Quakers were known to have been very active in the Underground Railroad. The most famous of these, Levi Coffin wrote in his autobiography of traversing the state and his stops in the various Quaker communities of Vigo, Putnam, Hendricks and Morgan counties. His travels from Newport (Fountain City) to Indianapolis, to Plainfield and Terre Haute had to have been made along the National Road as the most direct route of the times.

The same logic stands for the Rev. William Paul Quinn, who as founder of most of the early African-Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) churches in Indiana, traversed the state. He is known to be the founder of Allen Chapel A.M.E. in Terre Haute, but yet made his home in Richmond on the other side of the state. Also, the Revels brothers, Hiram and Willis were known to have traveled the state, with both having spent time at Allen Chapel in Terre Haute and Willis at Bethel A.M.E in Indianapolis before and during the war years. Having arrived in Indiana as Free Blacks from North Carolina, and schooled by Quakers, surely their sermons incorporated anti-slavery sentiments.

Henry Ward Beecher tried not to take a stance on the issue his sister Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote so vehemently about in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. But sooner, rather than later, a

near-chance meeting with Frederick Douglass² and other issues coming to the forefront during his service as pastor at the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis and speeches at the Congregational Church in Terre Haute, loosened his tongue to lash out against the cause of slavery.³

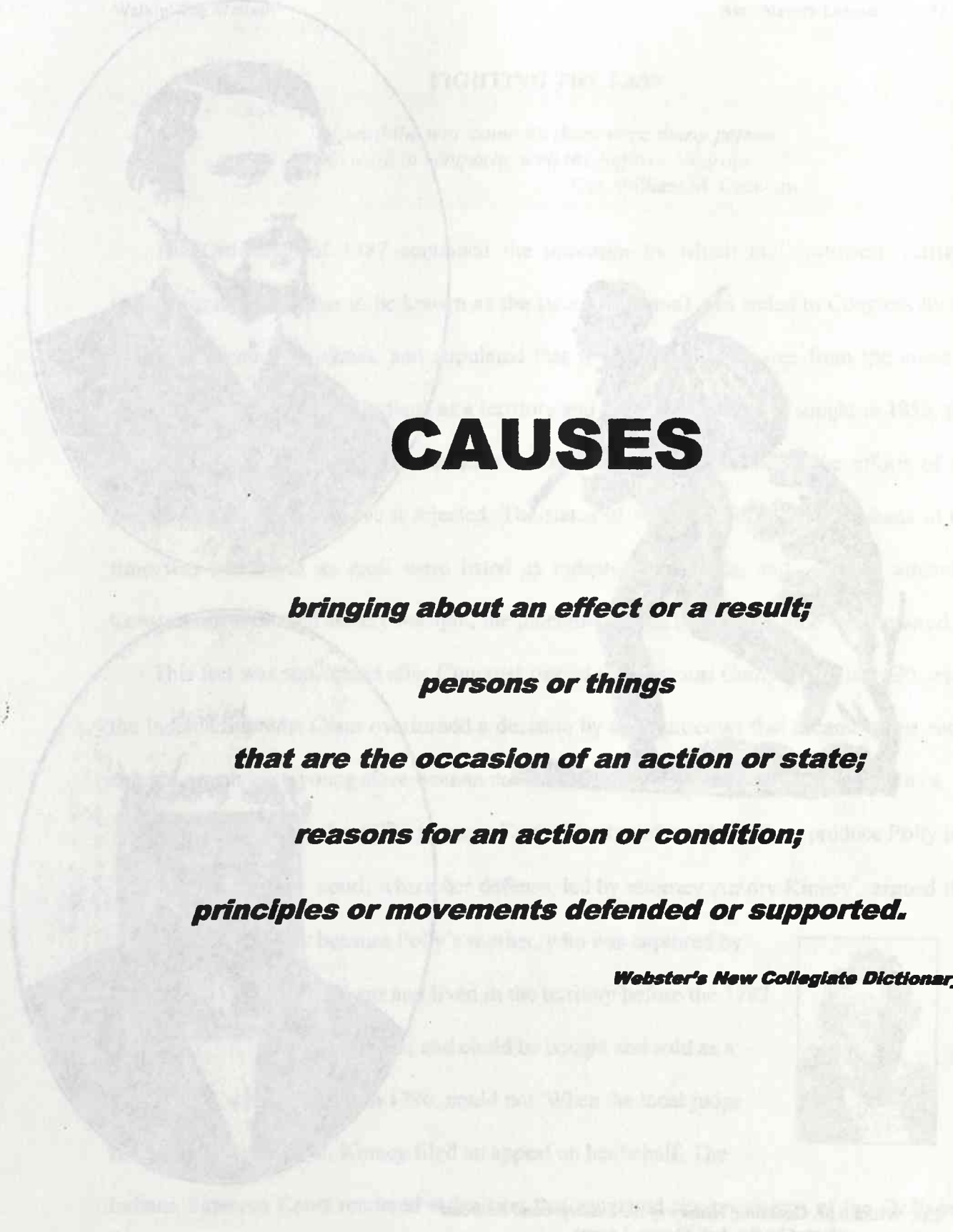
With all of these men – while not ones to shy away from and very used to speaking out – it is equally unlikely that they would hinder the way of those searching for a better way of life and freedom in the north. Messages and mail could have been carried along this new route, so also would be news of how other communities were dealing with the issues of the day, to be discussed before, during, and after sermons or meetings.

The National Road stands as a connection to both the east and west. While not looking at it as a scenic byway at the time, those who traversed it in the cause of liberty for all must have seen its beauty in a different light – the light of freedom.

¹ www.state.in.us/dnr/historic/inra

² Paxton Hibben, *Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait*. The Press of the Readers Club. (New York: 1942)

³ *Ibid.*



CAUSES

bringing about an effect or a result;

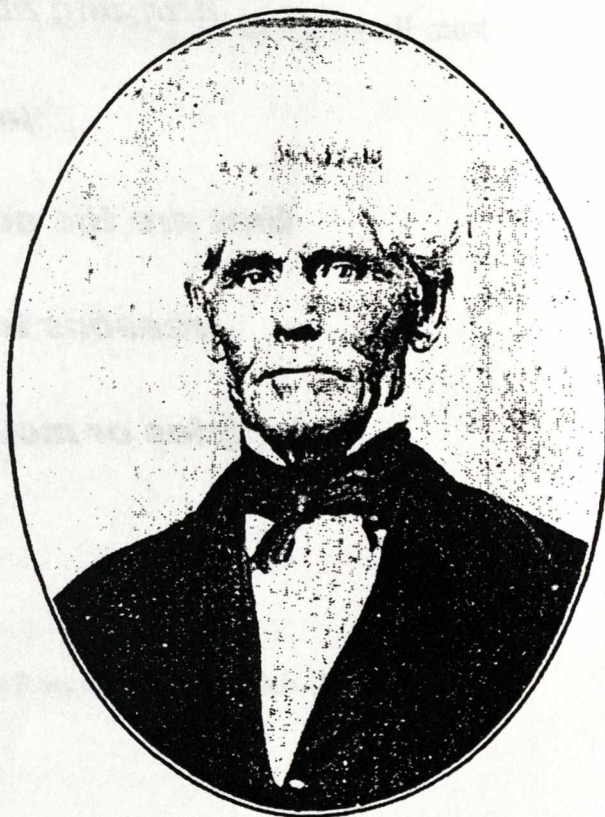
persons or things

that are the occasion of an action or state;

reasons for an action or condition;

principles or movements defended or supported.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary



Col. William M. Cockrum. *History of the Underground Railroad*
as it was conducted by the Anti-Slavery League.
(J.W. Cockrum Printing Company, Oakland City, Indiana,
facsimile reprint, Heritage Books, Inc. Bowie, Maryland, 1991)

FIGHTING THE LAW

*"...until the war came on there were many persons
who were in sympathy with the fugitive Negroes..."*

Col. William M. Cockrum

The Ordinance of 1787 contained the provision by which the Northwest Territory (including that area later to be known as the state of Indiana) was ceded to Congress by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and stipulated that it should ever be free from the curse of human slavery. This saved Indiana as a territory and when statehood was sought in 1816, this same clause found its way into the state's Constitution, notwithstanding the efforts of the pro-slavery elements to have it rejected. The status of African Americans in Indiana at the time was precarious as most were listed as indentured servants, and when an amended Constitution abolished slavery outright, the indentures made before that time were ignored.

This fact was showcased after Congress passed the Missouri Compromise in 1820, when the Indiana Supreme Court overturned a decision by a circuit court that became a test cause célèbre, involving a young slave woman named Polly, whom Hyacinthe LaSalle held as a



slave. The judge in Knox County ordered LaSalle to produce Polly in court, where her defense, led by attorney Amory Kinney*, argued that because Polly's mother, who was captured by Indians and lived in the territory before the 1787 Ordinance and could be bought and sold as a



slave, Polly, who was born in 1796, could not. When the local judge ruled in LaSalle's favor, Kinney filed an appeal on her behalf. The

Indiana Supreme Court rendered a decision that reiterated the provisions of the Ordinance and the Constitution and, reversing the decision of the lower court awarding ownership of

Polly to LaSalle, set her free. While this set a tone that slavery was illegal, it did nothing to prohibit the acts of bounty hunters and covert slavery still existed in Indiana.¹

This may have had more to do with the financial affairs of the early 1800's rather than on the issue of slavery itself. A tax of \$3 was levied on every slave or servant of color between the ages of twenty-one to fifty-five, just as if they were cattle or horses. In some counties, such as Knox, this money was to be appropriated by the court to some public school. Since there was a distinct value to these "pieces of property," problems began to arise with the issue of bounty hunters. Even as early as 1818 a joint resolution came before the general assembly on the subject of "sundry persons, destitute of every principal of humanity are in the habit of seizing, carrying off, and selling as slaves, free persons of color who are, or have been for a long time, inhabitants of this State,"² But, in the same utterance, they noted that they would not interfere in the return of just claims of the slave owners, if the proper proof of ownership was presented. Thus, one of the first issues the new legislature of Indiana would be dealing with was "man-stealing."³

In 1850 the federal Fugitive Slave Law was enacted, stating that anyone who harbored a slave or prevented masters from capturing their slaves could be fined up to \$1,000 and imprisoned for six months for each slave involved. Slaves were denied the right to a trial by jury. The law also permitted slave owners the right to organize posses to pursue and capture the runaways.⁴

The federal law was harsher than the laws on Indiana books and it meant that no northern state was a safe haven for a fugitive from the south. With the passage of the law, changes in many aspects of the movement occurred. Some sympathizers may have curtailed participation in the Underground Railroad for fear of reprisals. Splits began to occur within

the various religious groups, including the Society of Friends, who had been the staunchest participants. But it could also be said that activity along the Underground Railroad moved more feverishly, not only for slaves seeking freedom, but also for those white abolitionists who now found themselves in a position to be prosecuted.

Several groups were formed to fight the enforcement of the law, even though it put those involved in even more danger. One such organization was the Anti-Slavery League, which operated in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. In Indiana they were led by J.T. Hanover, also known as John Hansen. He reportedly persuaded other prominent pre-Civil War Hoosiers such as Dr. John Posey, Col. James Cockrum, Rev. T.B. McCormick and Judge A.L. Robinson of Evansville, to join in the cause taking the view that they would not have organized, "if the people of the South had not caused a law to be spread on the statutes of the United States that gave them domineering privileges over the North. These unusual privileges were taken advantage of by many men all over this country who attempted to, and did kidnap, thousands of free Negroes and sold them into slavery."⁵

As a naturalist, Hansen spent his time in the area of southern Indiana from Evansville, north to Oakland City. Bedridden for a time due to a snake bite, Hansen was supposedly visited by men who were secretly in the employ of the League. When well again, he would travel through three or four counties, pretending to represent an eastern real estate firm. His underlings had all been selected from a cadre of well-disciplined young men who could be trusted to carry on the goals of the League without any suspicions.⁶

Well-run and amply financed, the League established a capable team of boatmen at various points with an elaborate system of signals to bring slaves across the rivers. To get fugitive slaves to freedom the League's resorted to secretive assaults, counter espionage and

outright resistance which would rival any future exploits during wartime. They set up codes, detectives and a spy force that outwitted the best plantation owners could offer. Their undercover men were young and highly educated, often posing as surveyors, geologists, naturalists and other professionals. Prominent Hoosier abolitionist businessmen, doctors and farmers directed opposition to the federal law to help slaves and Free Blacks alike northward to the shores of Lake Michigan to board league-operated ships to Canada. Typically seen as men of compassion, however, unlike the non-violent Quakers, the League's spies and guards were armed and not shy about using them to get their point across.⁷

Although the league ceased activities during the Civil War, Hansen, now known as J.T. Hanover alleged that "during a seven year period, over 4,000 freedom seekers a year passed through" his district in southwestern Indiana.⁸ While this number seems a bit farfetched, there is no doubt that the Anti-Slavery League etched names into the history of western Indiana and the cause of the flight to freedom.

Photo of Hyacinth LaSalle taken from *Bury Me In a Free Land* by Gwendolyn Crenshaw. 1993

Photo of Amory Kinney taken from *1880 History of Vigo County Indiana* by Judge S.B. Gookins, 1880

* Amory Kinney, whose life was threatened during this period, moved northward to Vigo County in 1826 where he became a Federal judge in 1827 and a charter member of Terre Haute's Congregational Church in 1834. Hyacinthe LaSalle partnered with Abraham Markle in the formation of the Terre Haute Land Co., which owned most of the area surrounding Ft. Harrison and where Markle's son built one of the first grist mills in the state, later rumored to be a stop on the Underground Railroad in the Wabash Valley. [Judge S.B. Gookins, *1880 History of Vigo County Indiana*, H.H. Bill & S. Iddings, Chicago, 1880. 31, 167]

¹ Crenshaw, *Bury Me In a Free Land*, 8-9

² H. C. Bradsby. *History of Vigo County Indiana with Biographical Selections*, S. B. Nelson & Co, Chicago. 1891, 365

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Betty Lane. "Railroad Without Rails," *Outdoor Indiana*, Indianapolis, March, 1968, 4-7

⁵ Col. William M. Cockrum. *History of the Underground Railroad as it was conducted by the Anti-Slavery League*. J.W. Cockrum Printing Company, Oakland City, Indiana, facsimile reprint, Heritage Books, Inc. Bowie, Maryland, 1991, v

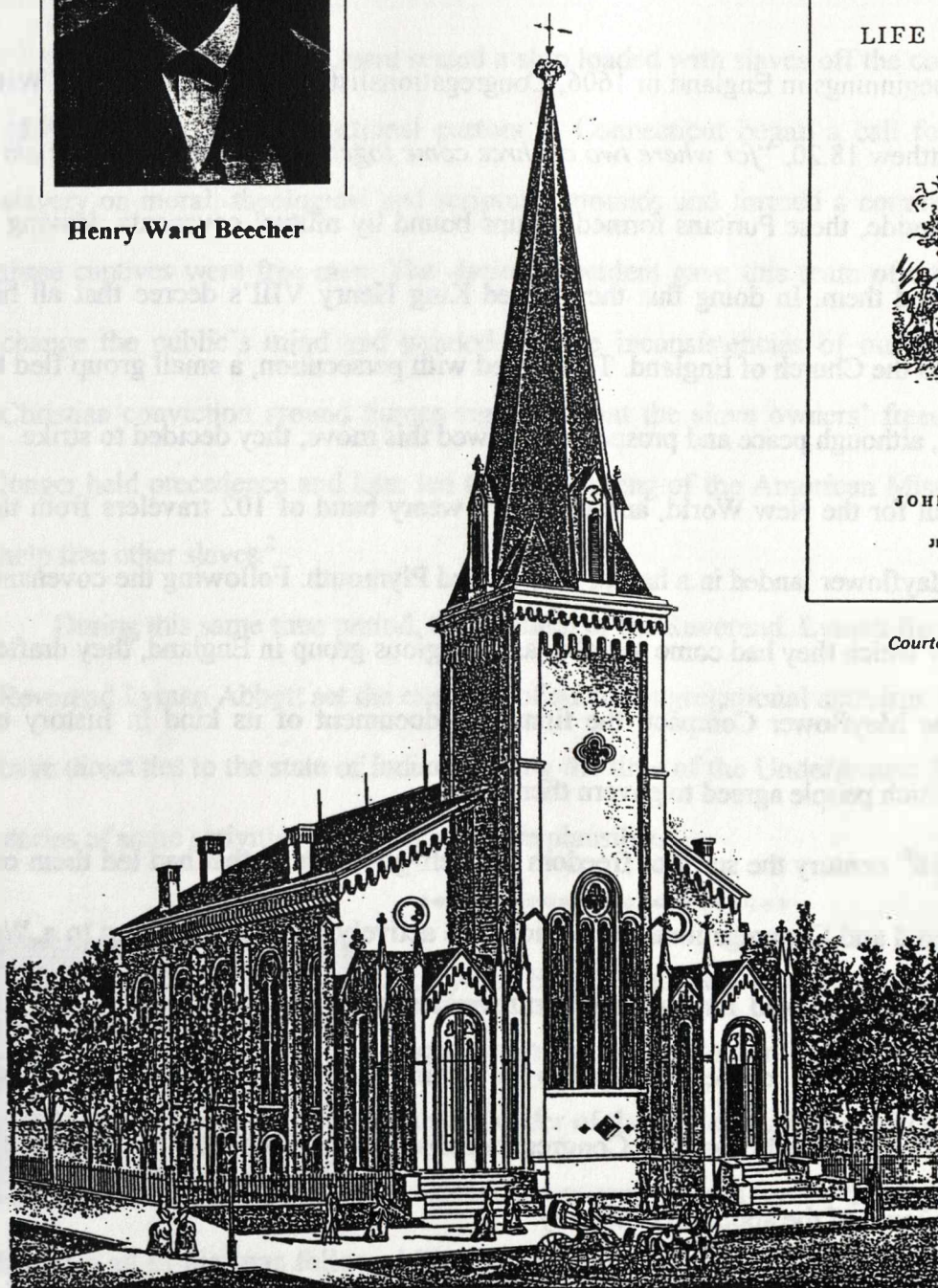
⁶ *Ibid.* 15-16

⁷ Albert W. Lindert. *Gunmakers of Indiana* Sheffield Press, Inc. 1968

⁸ Cockrum. *History of the Underground Railroad as it was conducted by the Anti-Slavery League*, 320



Henry Ward Beecher



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, TERRE HAUTE, IND.
REV. E. FRANK HOWE, PASTOR.

located at 6th & Cherry St.
Terre Haute
Rendering from
Vigo County Atlas of 1874
courtesy of the Vigo County Public Library Special Collections

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN;

OR,

LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.

BY

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE



VOL. I.

BOSTON:

JOHN P. JEWETT & COMPANY.

CLEVELAND, OHIO:

JEWETT, PROCTOR & WORTHINGTON.

1852.

Courtesy Indiana Division, Indiana State Library

PILGRIMS' CAUSES

*"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,
And do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage."*

Galatians 5:1

From their beginnings in England in 1606, Congregationalists have been activists. With the words of Matthew 18:20, "*for where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them*" as a guide, these Puritans formed groups bound by mutual covenants, leaving a state church behind them. In doing this they defied King Henry VIII's decree that all his subjects belong to the Church of England. Threatened with persecution, a small group fled to Europe and later, although peace and prosperity followed this move, they decided to strike



out for the New World, and in 1620 a weary band of 102 travelers from the Mayflower landed in a harbor they named Plymouth. Following the covenants by which they had come together as a religious group in England, they drafted the Mayflower Compact, the first such document of its kind in history by which people agreed to govern themselves.

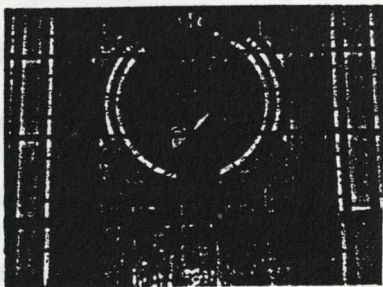
During the 18th century the spirit of freedom and self-government that had led them out of England festered and Congregationalists participated actively in actions leading to a War of Independence. Time moved forward and controversies came and went, and as in other denominations, splits in the congregations led to the joining and later reformation with other sects, but one thing remained constant: Congregationalists led in Christian social activism, especially on the issue of the abolition of slavery.

Abolitionists were often confused with those who were anti-slavery. There *was* a difference. While both were against the causes of slavery, those who were anti-slavery did not necessarily want African-Americans to have equal rights. But abolitionists believed that

all Americans were "created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as set out in the Declaration that formed the United States.¹

When the U.S. Coast Guard seized a ship loaded with slaves off the coast of New York in 1839, a group of Congregational pastors in Connecticut began a call for the abolition of slavery on moral, theological and scriptural grounds and formed a committee to argue that these captives were free men. The *Amistad* incident gave this team of citizens a chance to change the public's mind and pointed out the inconsistencies of our laws. It galvanized Christian conviction around human rights so that the slave owners' freedom of choice no longer held precedence and later led to the founding of the American Missionary Society to help free other slaves.²

During this same time period, the children of the Reverend. Lyman Beecher and later the Reverend Lyman Abbott set the example of such Congregational activism. The fact that they have direct ties to the state of Indiana during the time of the Underground Railroad make the stories of some activities just so much more plausible.



Rev. Lyman Beecher earned a reputation as a hell-fire-spouting preacher from Brimstone Corner (Massachusetts), who later became a leader of the 19th century Second Great Awakening.

Rev. Beecher was well-known for his theological work, and the fact that all of his sons followed him into the pulpit. But it was the championship of social causes which brought fame to four of the 13 Beecher children: daughter Catherine, who considered the treatment of women as her cause for social justice and founded five schools

for their education; son Edward, who made his name in the power of the printed word, especially railing against those who favored violence as their voice in favor of slavery; daughter Harriet, who reportedly was credited for inciting the cause leading to the Civil War; and son Henry Ward, a flamboyant orator, especially with regards to the barbaric practices associated with slavery.

While Catherine earned fame in her own right as one of the greatest figures in the causes relating to women's suffrage, it is the lives of her three siblings and that of Rev. Abbott, who would later follow in Henry Ward's footsteps, that had a profound effect on bringing the slavery issue out into the open in Indiana. *[Note: The role of Rev. Lyman Abbott will be covered in the section relating to Vigo County.]*

Edward Beecher first displayed his anti-slavery leanings in 1830 when he left a pulpit in Boston to become the first president of Illinois College in Jacksonville. A strong Southern-based population had built the village in a state more tolerant of slavery and many did not take too kindly to Beecher's point of view. When some of his students were accused of harboring fugitive slaves, Edward was the first of the Beecher's to face the issue squarely and by becoming an organizer of Illinois' first anti-slavery law.³

The power of the printed word in the cause against slavery was vividly brought to his attention when in 1837 his friend Rev. Elijah Lovejoy, editor of the *Alton Telegraph*, was brutally killed in defense of his press by angry pro-slavery mobs, even after local officials assured Beecher that Lovejoy would be protected. In fact, Beecher probably would have died alongside his friend if he had not been convinced of this. Considering that Lovejoy's other two editors were Congregationalists, it is easy to see how Edward continued on Lovejoy's

path with his book, *Narrative of Alton Riots*, describing the events in Alton as the first battled of the Civil War.

In 1849 he returned to New England to become the editor-in-chief of *The Congregationalist*. This publication reflected a more vigorous opposition to slavery and the acceptance of a younger generation of ministers' points of view. It is possible that Edward's writing significantly influenced his sister's attitude and his brother's opposition toward slavery and while often overlooked by historians in favor of his younger sister and brother, his views on free speech and the free press are not to be taken lightly.⁴

Harriet Beecher spent her childhood relatively happy, but clearly dominated by older brothers and sisters. At the age of five, she took younger brother Henry Ward by the hand and entered Litchfield Academy. She later followed Catherine to Hartford Female Seminary and began a teaching career in 1829. When her father moved to Cincinnati in 1832 to head the Lane Theological Seminary, Harriet went along and continued her teaching, so much so that she took up writing articles for magazines and even published a couple of books to relieve stress as much as to produce some extra income. While she may have thought her marriage to a young widower and professor at the seminary, Calvin E. Stowe, in 1836 would make her life easier, she soon found she was mistaken. Calvin was a distinguished Biblical scholar, but unschooled in the ways of domestic harmony, so it fell upon Harriet to see to their seven children through race riots in Cincinnati, a cholera epidemic and the death of one of their siblings.

Returning to New England in 1850, Harriet took to her pen again, resulting in several publications, the most famous (or infamous depending on your point of view) being *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), a *Key to 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'* (1853), and *Dred: A Tale of the Great*

Dismal Swamp (1856), all of which dealt with the horrors of what she knew to be the fact and the fiction of slavery. She was often challenged with regards to the accuracy of her writings, but it is known that she drew her vision of brutal overseer Simon Legree from an account her brother Charles related to her and that a personal visit to a Kentucky plantation gave her a description for the Shelby estate. Since Cincinnati was a major passage point on the Underground Railroad, it is easy to see that Harriet could have know first-hand about circumstances that could have led to the ice-crossing. While it is only rumored that Simeon and Rachel Halliday are based on Levi and Catherine Coffin, Harriet did acknowledge that the first autobiography of Josiah Henson has some influence on her portrait of Uncle Tom.⁵

The publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* stirred powerful feelings. It was read around the world and either acclaimed as brilliant by pro-abolitionists or cursed as lies, libel and ignorance by Southern sympathizers and press. Its success led to other controversial publications about slavery, keeping the issue in the public's eye until Col. Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox.

Henry Ward, the youngest of Lyman Beecher's sons by his first wife began his pastoral career as an evangelist in the "wild west" of Indiana and Ohio, where he learned first-hand about the practice of slavery. During his three years at Lane Seminary, under the self-absorbed tendencies of his father and older sister, he ignored the questions of slavery and confined his writing to the subject of the evils of mob rule. His works had no general influence and while he regarded slavery as a sin, he was not convinced of the rights by which Abolitionists imposed their will.

Captivated with writing, Henry Ward was brought in touch with a world of people in Cincinnati that he would never had otherwise had the opportunity to meet: an aged General

William Henry Harrison, *The Philanthropist* publisher James G. Birnery, his brother's friend Elijah Lovejoy, Lane trustee Asa Mahan and professors John Morgan, Theodore Weld and Henry B. Stanton (who later married a young woman named Elizabeth Cady).

Through his mystic brother-in-law Calvin Stowe, Henry Ward finally found that Christianity was something more than the iron face of God that his father was always pontificating about. Knowing that his father's eagle eye would be over him if he stayed in Cincinnati, he was elated to be offered a small Presbyterian Church in Lawrenceburgh, Indiana, in 1837, even though he was yet to be ordained. With a new wife, fresh from a Puritan upbringing in New England, Henry Ward Beecher took up residence in what he later recalled to be "the very metropolis of whiskey,"⁶ and from the pulpit he chose to preach on the evils of drunkenness rather than slavery.

With one of his goals being securing a large congregation, in 1838 Beecher took steps toward ordination and on November 9 was installed by his father. When his church was selected as a site to raise funds for the American Colonization Society, he suddenly became a leading citizen and doors opened up and wheels to his fate began to turn.

In 1839 Henry Ward Beecher was invited to Indianapolis, newly named capital of the state. With a one year old daughter and ailing wife Eunice, who was not enamoured of life in this "wilderness" and who felt her feelings turning into a hatred, Henry Ward moved to take on a new congregation. Eunice was not impressed with her new surroundings or the people and as her husband found himself drawn more into the issue of slavery as a "palpable violation of the law of God,"⁷ her discontent grew.

His new congregation fully expected and supported him to speak out on the evils of slavery, yet he held back and decided to leave the issue alone. He focused on increasing the

size of his congregation and with a style of oratory that would follow him henceforth, he came into demand as a lecturer and revivalist. He traveled the state – Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana University in Bloomington, First Congregational Church in Terre Haute. While he believed that slavery was fundamentally wrong, but he felt that under the Constitution there could be no interference with it, especially in the slave states. Beecher opposed the compromise measures of 1850 on the grounds that liberty and slavery are irreconcilable elements in our political system and thus would still not deliver an open edict on slavery issue.⁸

As Henry Ward was traveling from a meeting in Lafayette back to Indianapolis, he and one of his elders came across “a group of Abolitionists and a former slave,”⁹ whose part it was to recite his escape, were holding meetings. The good folk of Pendleton were possessed of minds that could conceive of but one possible explanation of the presence of a white woman and a Negro man in the same company. Accordingly, they mobbed the Abolitionists. The ringleader of the riot was duly arrested, pleaded guilty and was jailed. But three hundred mounted men armed with rifles galloped into Indianapolis and demanded his release – and Governor Whitcomb pardoned the man.”¹⁰ Henry reportedly spoke out about the injustice here, but still never touched the topic of slavery directly.

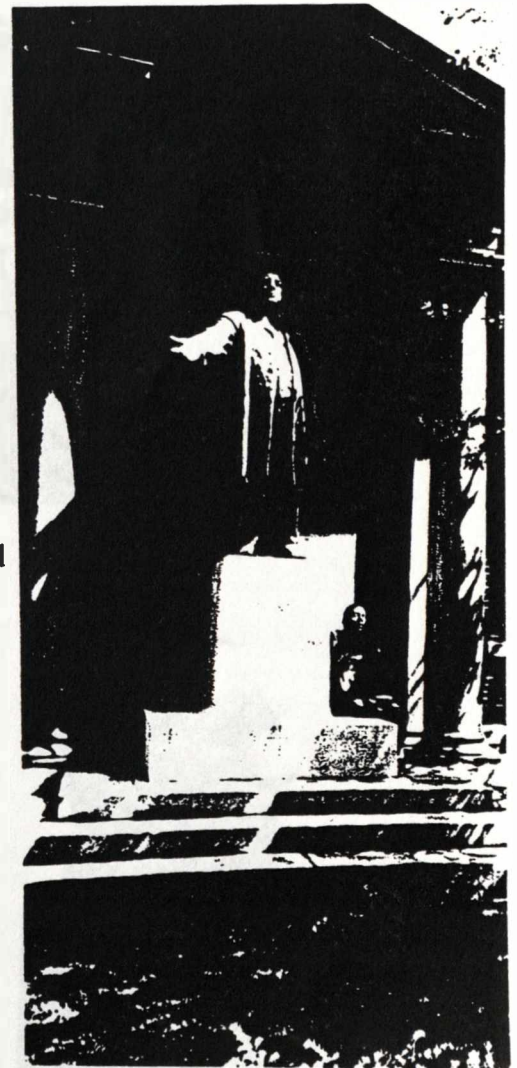
He continued to grow in stature as a speaker and writer, but kept his views on slavery largely to himself and a small group of respected leaders of his congregation. The mob beating of an elderly Negro outside his own church and a push by the Indiana State Synod, and finally, jabs by the press comparing him to Edward's and Harriet's – even his own father's – stance on the subject, finally lifted the cloud on his reticence to speak out. But at the same time his goal to be at the head of an even larger congregation came back to the

forefront and in 1847, to the elation of his wife, he moved his family to Brooklyn, New York, to become the pastor of the Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims.

Henry Ward Beecher's prowess as an orator and flamboyant minister on the issue of slavery took a complete turn after his arrival in New York. Great orators such as Horace Greeley and even Abraham Lincoln came to speak on the issues of the day at Plymouth Church [Author's Note: Lincoln's signature rests on a nameplate on the pew behind Beecher's at the church and it is said that during his visit to New York in 1860, Plymouth was the only church he attended. Later speakers such as Booker T. Washington, Clara Barton, and even Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. continue Beecher's strong tradition of voicing opinions continues.] He began holding slave auctions in the church to shock the congregates about the ills of such events, had tunnels constructed under the church for his anti-slavery activities and accumulated rifles to send to the fighting men out west, which were later shipped disguised as "Beecher's Bibles."

Personal crisis later took their toll on his reputation, but Henry Ward Beecher, along with his renowned siblings, is well remembered in Indiana. And he is often known as the founder of *the* Grand Central Depot for the Underground Railroad in the North.

Photo of stained glass window depicting Lyman Beecher and statue of Henry Ward Beecher and a young slave girl known as Pinky. Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims, Brooklyn, New York, taken by Marlene Lu



¹ "The Underground Railroad," *Griot*. A publication of the Indiana Department of Commerce, Tourism and Film Development Division, in cooperation with the African-American Tourism Council of Indiana, Inc. 1994

² Rev. Peter J. Smith. "To Release the Captives: The Amistad Incident," www.congregationalist.org/Volume157/Number5/amistad

³ Allen Johnson, editor. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. II (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1929) #3 L & R, 128

⁴ Joe Polhemus. "The Congregationalist Celebrates 150 Years," *The Congregationalist*, Vol. 159, No. 4. (National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, Oct/Nov, 1999)

⁵ Edward Wagenknecht. *Harriet Beecher Stowe: The Known and Unknown*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1965)

⁶ Paxton Hibben. *Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait*. (The Press of the Readers Club, New York, 1942), 68

⁷ *Ibid.* 80

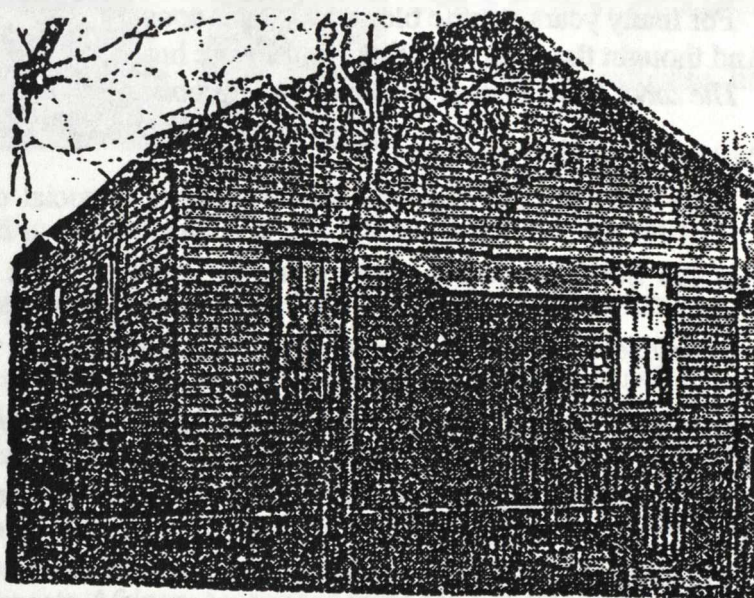
⁸ Allen Johnson, editor. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. II (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1929) #8 L & R, 129

⁹ Frederick Douglass. In his autobiography Douglass recounted this attack where he was knocked unconscious and his hand was broken, permanently maimed. A member of the Society of Friends took care of him. He spoke one more time in Newport in 1844, but then did not return to Indiana until after the Civil War. His two appearances in Terre Haute in the late 1860s assisted with raising the funds necessary to build a new church for Allen Chapel A.M.E.

¹⁰ Hibben, *Henry Ward Beecher*, 89



Rev. William Paul Quinn



The first Allen Chapel AME Church
Terre Haute, Indiana



Archives of Allen Chapel AME Church
Terre Haute, Indiana

The Hon. Hiram Revels

THE ANVIL CHURCH*The Anvil Poem*

Last eve I passed a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil sing the vesper chime,
Then looking in I saw lying prostrate on the floor,
Old hammers worn by blasting years of time.

How many anvils have you had said I,
To wear and batter those hammers so?
Just one, said he with a twinkle in his eye,
The anvil wears the hammer out you know.

And so I thought, the anvil of God's word,
For many years skeptic blows have beat upon
And thought the noise of falling blows were heard,
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers are gone.

Author Unknown

The lines of color have always existed in one way or another in social organizations, including the church. In the South, churches only the slaves attended were always eyed cautiously, rumored as having some stigma of voodoo or witchcraft attached to them to scare others from attending. It was also feared that they would band together, conspiring to revolt or escape their bondage. Thus, slaves attended the same church as their masters, sitting in a special section to enable them to hear, but also for them to be watched, but not giving them entitlement to the same treatment or privileges of the church.

Following the Revolutionary War, Northern slave owners began releasing their slaves from bondage, but these freedmen often had no place to go for worship. Discrimination occurred at the mixed churches they had attended, especially since they now were perceived to be expecting treatment as equals and wanting their issues and concerns to be addressed, as well as being allowed to participate fully in all forms of the services. Not achieving much

success at accomplishing this, they began to pull away to form their own denominations and



Aided by Quakers, Richard Allen and Ebsolam Jones had formed the Free African Society in Philadelphia in 1787. It was the first mutual aid organization for African-Americans in the country, providing assistance as they could to those freedmen in need. Richard Allen, born a slave in Philadelphia, was self-educated and able to purchase his freedom before he could be sold to a new owner in Delaware. He

had converted to Christianity and was doing so well in ministering, that the bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church where he attended began giving him preaching assignments.¹

After becoming ordained, both Allen and Jones, now also an ordained minister, persuaded many of the African-Americans in the community to attend St. George Methodist Episcopal Church. But in 1794, a movement began among the white parishioners of the church to segregate African-Americans from the congregation. When barred from praying at the altar like the white members of the congregation, the African-Americans decided to leave St. George.²

A converted blacksmith shop became Rev. Allen's first house of worship, where services were held until a proper home could be found for the new Bethel Church, mother church to the African Methodist Episcopal denomination dedicated in 1794. Since an anvil is the chief instrument for the molding of metal by the blacksmith, Allen determined it would

become the official symbol of the A.M.E. church to denote that instead of molding metal, the church molded lives. While his aim was to make the church not only an agency for religious uplifting, Allen was also pushed into the anti-slavery movement and the efforts of the Underground Railroad. The A.M.E. Church had now become a factor in the battle for freedom.³

Other churches followed soon after, and a new church conference was established in Philadelphia in 1816. With sixteen independent congregations under his charge, Rev. Richard Allen was named the first A.M.E. bishop and a book was adopted which followed the general principles in practice among Methodists.⁴ In addition to seeing to the spiritual needs of his congregates, Allen also felt that other developments must be included into the church's doctrine, especially that of the mind through education. This doctrine came to the forefront in many of these new churches as they sprang up where free African-Americans settled, or as slaves escaping to freedom began blending into the settlements established in Ohio and Indiana, as evidenced in 1840 when the Indiana A.M.E. Conference was established.

One man had spearheaded the establishment of the Indiana conference, Rev. William Paul Quinn. Little is known about his life as a child, except that he was born in Calcutta, India, in 1788. His family were merchants and known Hindus, but the young Quinn disliked their way of worship. Converted to Christianity by Quaker missionaries, he was banished from his family and he made his way to the United States to follow more of the teachings of his new faith. During his time in Pennsylvania he became interested in the Methodist Episcopal teachings. But, like Allen, he discovered that his skin color caused discrimination from this church, and so he turned to the A.M.E. In 1812 he was licensed to preach.

Quinn continued to spread the A.M.E. word until a disagreement with Allen caused his separation from them. In 1833 he was readmitted and assigned to the "new wilderness" of Indiana and Illinois. He traveled the two states, establishing churches and congregations by himself, where none had existed before. In fact he planted the seeds, either directly or through his followers for all of the A.M.E. churches found in the Wabash Valley basin. By 1844, Quinn could proudly report that the region had forty-seven churches, with two thousand members. In addition, he had organized fifty Sunday schools and forty temperance societies and had held seventeen camp meetings.⁵ All of his work was finally recognized in 1844 when he was named a bishop of the church. While his founding tasks came to a close, he continued to remain in the region, serving and developing the conference into one with a strong voice. By 1854 more than one fifth of the African-Americans in the state were members of the A.M.E. and Quinn's home church in Richmond was the largest with 270 members. He remained in the Richmond area and spent his last years enjoying the many friends he had made. William Paul Quinn died in 1873 and was buried in the cemetery at Earlham College.

To Quinn and men like him, Indiana was a natural breeding ground for the growth of the A.M.E. faith. The most influential institution in any community remained its church, usually one of the first structures built. This was especially true in the African-American settlements. Many of the new "immigrants" moving into the state were the Free Blacks, often traveling with Quakers from North Carolina, so many of them were located near the Quaker communities.

Although many of these people could trace their free status back to the Revolutionary War, the state of North Carolina set in motion laws that began to restrict where they could

live, discouraging education and preaching and issuing edicts on the way they could earn a living. The Quakers, who were opposed to the policies, practices and principles of slavery, were also repulsed by these new restrictions. Thus, the westward exodus began.⁶

Another name that led the way in spreading the A.M.E. doctrine was that of Revels, the brothers Hiram and Willis. Free Blacks from North Carolina, they attended the Quaker seminary at Liberty, in Wayne County and Hiram later graduated from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. While Willis spent most the time since his arrival based in Indianapolis, Hiram traveled the circuit of not only those churches Quinn had already established, but expanding the reach of A.M.E. even more. His work was especially prevalent in the Wabash Valley basin, most notably at Terre Haute where the Allen Chapel School was established,⁷ setting the way for the education of many of western Indiana's notable African-Americans. He married Phoebe Bass,⁸ a family name well-known in the Free Black settlements of Indiana.⁹

Members of the church were not the only targets of the educational arrow of the A.M.E. doctrine. While the church was a center for social and charitable activities, more importantly Rev. Allen strongly believed it was also the place to develop potential leaders of the budding African-American communities, in addition to training from within new ministerial candidates to lead the churches. Most were located in primitive structures, usually where worship services were also held. Some only held classes for two or three months out of the year and at best, students were only taught the basics of the '3 Rs' of reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic. Quakers often volunteered to be teachers and assisted with classes. The word spread of these schools that were being created and by 1854, 18 day schools and 24 Sunday

schools were holding classes across the state, leading to more immigration by African-Americans — free or not.

Within this new wilderness, many of these wanderers had to blend together, sharing in an abiding faith in God to enable them to survive and endure. But as towns and areas of growth began to spring up, the old segregation issue began to rear its ugly head. In addition, there existed the additional potential danger of harassment by those whites who had pro-slavery leanings. A.M.E. churches and schools were often made the targets. Bethel Church in Indianapolis was nearly destroyed by fire set as a warning to its minister Willis Revels, who was known to be very active in aiding refugee slaves. As war broke out, Willis supposedly volunteered with several others to join in the Union cause, but they all were turned down as Indiana had no Colored Troops.

Following the paths set by its founders, the A.M.E. churches were the most responsible of the African-American religious affiliations, for the development of their way of life in Indiana. Of the other denominations playing a role in this development, the most prevalent were the Baptists, — often known as the Second Baptists — however, much of their work was not as visible until after the end of the Civil War. Presbyterians were also very prominent in the religious circles of the state, but only in a few rural areas did they extend their teaching to the African-Americans. And while Quakers were one of the most supportive hands to the African-American communities, very few African-Americans took to the Quaker teachings as congregates.

Thus, whether they served as Underground Railroad stations, schools or just as places of worship, the African Methodist Episcopal Churches in Indiana provided many of the keys to a new way of life for many new Hoosier residents.

¹ Audrey Graham. "Significance of Allen Chapel History," Archives file, Vigo County Public Library Special Collections

² *Ibid*

³ Allen Johnson, editor. Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. I (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1929) 204

⁴ Carter G. Woodson, *History of the Negro Church* (2nd ed. Washington, D.C., 1945) 62-66.

⁵ Emma Lou Thornbrough. *The Negro In Indiana Before 1900*, 154.

⁶ "Black Settlements in Indiana," *The Indiana Junior Historian*, (Indiana Historical Bureau, Indianapolis, February, 1993) 3

⁷ Merle Bullard Shepard. "A History of the Negro Schools in Vigo County." August, 1948. Archives, Vigo County Public Library Special Collections

⁸ *Who Was Who in America*. Historical Vol. 1607-1896. (A. N. Marquis Co., Chicago, 1963) 438

⁹ Hiram eventually left Indiana for Mississippi during the Reconstruction period. Entering into politics on a local level, he later went on to be elected the first African-American member of the U.S. Senate in 1870. It was ironic that the seat he filled was that of Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy. While his ministerial leanings were always present, education also remained a focal point for Revels. After his Senatorial service he co-founded Alcorn University. He died on January 16, 1901. [Michael McCormick. "Wabash Valley Profile: Hiram Revels," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*. No date listed.]

INFORMATION
ABOUT GOING TO LIBERIA:

WITH
THINGS WHICH EVERY EMIGRANT OUGHT TO KNOW:

REPORT OF
MESSRS. FULLER AND JANIFER:

SKETCH OF
THE HISTORY OF LIBERIA:

AND THE
CONSTITUTION

OF THE
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA.

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY.

WASHINGTON:
C. ALEXANDER, PRINTER.
1852.

*Courtesy Archives Division,
Indiana Commission on Public Records*



Photo Library of Congress website

RETURNING TO THE ROOTS - A NEW LIBERTY

*"...to send beyond the limits of the United States
all captures Negroes, and to appoint agents,
residing on the coast of Africa to receive them."*

Gwendolyn Crenshaw, Bury Me in a Free Land

In 1817 an organization was formed to encourage Free African-Americans to settle in the new republic of Liberia, located on the coast of northern West Africa, as an alternative to emancipation and the discrimination they faced in the United States. Many of the supporters of the new movement were notables of the day, including Francis Scott Key, Henry Clay and John Randolph and a wealthy Free Black from Massachusetts, Paul Cuffe, who took thirty-eight African-Americans to Africa at his own expense in 1815.¹ Set into motion by declarations from President James Monroe, the American Colonization Society was now in business.

Southern states saw a free African-American population as a threat to peace and security because these new "citizens" would now see themselves as "equals," desiring the same rights and privileges that Whites enjoyed. The American Colonization Society was seen as a means of ridding this class of people from the U.S. and supporters used the argument that it was dangerous for them to remain in the South and that they could never attain a "true degree" of equality, even if they had their freedom. But, if they went back to Africa, they would be the leaders and developers of a brand new society, setting the trends and standards they seemed to desperately want, but could never have if they remained.

Religious sects saw this as a golden opportunity to spread their respective beliefs in a benevolent God and make the "heathens" turn to Christianity for their salvation. New markets for missionary work and colonization would be created.

While some state legislatures approved appropriations for funding the Society, financial support largely came from non-governmental sources. The movement gained momentum and many states had individual chapters to raise funds to cover the costs of this emancipation and to handle what would surely be thousands of requests from African-Americans wanting to return to the lands of their forebears.

But clouds grew on the horizon when some factions began wondering about hidden agendas of the society, seeing it as another facet in the exploitation of slaves. Quakers looked at the motives as being more than the cause of emancipation and abolition of slavery. Free Blacks, especially those born in America, denounced being 'deported.' Zealots on both sides of the issue began hosting rallies and publishing newspaper articles expressing their beliefs in the good which could come from the movement.

In Indiana the response was such that the Indiana's branch of the Society determined that selected members of the African-American communities in the state should go to Liberia to see if the 'grass was truly greener on the other side.' Willis Revels, then ministering at Allen Chapel in Terre Haute, was selected to be one of those representatives. However, he received so much mail protesting his departure and association with the Society, that he relinquished an association with them.²

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, the American Colonization Society stepped up its efforts to win more African-Americans to its cause. They used the power of the press and publications, using promises such as self-government, economic wealth beyond one's dreams and even bringing back some of those who had made the trip to speak out about the advantages to a Liberian way of life.

One such example came from a young descendant of a pristine Eboo tribal chief who returned to his former Indiana home from Monrovia twice – once prior to (1850) and once during (1864) the Civil War. Each time, his return to Terre Haute was treated as if he was visiting royalty and he was warmly greeted by the local press.

Edward James Roye's father had prudently moved north after being liberated in Kentucky before Edward's birth. Growing up in Ohio, the young Edward was enrolled in the area's best schools. The elder Roye wisely invested all the money he earned in the purchase of lands in the western frontiers of Indiana and Illinois, leaving the family in Newark, Ohio, moved on to Terre Haute in 1825 to be closer to his investments. In 1827 he became the partner in a Wabash River ferry operation. He also worked his way across the state of Illinois, buying land as he moved, until he died in November, 1829, leaving a now substantial estate to son Edward.³

Ambitious, educated and with a desire to travel, Edward had acquired rudimentary skills in French and went to work teaching to earn the money he to achieve these goals. Making sure that his disabled mother was taken care of and with a new bride in tow, Edward moved to see what kind of inheritance 640 acres of land in Vandalia, Illinois, was truly worth. Arriving in Terre Haute on The National Road, Edward must have liked what he saw, as he remained off and on for about eight years. Shortly after his arrival in 1837, he opened a barber shop and bath house near the town's leading hotel, near the banks of the Wabash River. Business boomed and he later boasted through weekly newspaper advertisements that his shop had "The 79 foot Barber Pole – the loftiest in this part of Indiana."⁴

As Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church was the only one where African-Americans in Terre Haute could worship, it is conceivable that the Roye family (now including two children)

were members of the congregation. At the state A.M.E. conference meeting held at Allen Chapel in 1842, a presentation was made by the Terre Haute chapter of the Indiana Colonization Society. The advantages expressed by this organization were not new – after all the Indiana Chapter was thirteen years old. But this time was different for Roye, as he now felt a challenge and his interest was peaked.

The death of his mother in 1840 had meant that, other than his wife and children, he had no families ties in the United States. It took some time, but by late 1845, he had divested all of his holdings in Indiana and Illinois and on May 2, 1846, the Roye family departed from New York, arriving in Monrovia, the Liberian capital, on June 7. Within two years, Roye had become a major force in Liberian commerce with a shipping fleet that rivaled none in the country. His ships sailed from Europe to America and his wealth was beyond compare in Liberia.

Liberia became independent in 1847, and it seemed to him that he could be a success at whatever he did, so the next challenge took Roye into a new world – that of political power. In 1849 he rose to the position of Speaker of the House and later became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In order to champion a cause that the country could only be ruled by “pure Africans” and reiterating his own roots to the Eboo tribe, Roye demanded immigrant screenings to prevent the opposition from increasing in numbers. As most of the earliest Liberians were of “mixed” blood, largely mulatto children of freed slaves that were entrenched in the Liberian culture and society, this tone set tongues wagging.⁵ These ideals set into motion the cause for his fall from the ivory tower he had created for himself in the new country.

Edward James Roye was elected Liberia's fifth president in 1870. His life was in jeopardy after some of the policies set into motion by his predecessor were not cleared up. While accusing his wife of infidelity, he himself was accused of graft and corruption during his term in office. An armed coup d'état deposed Roye on October 21, 1871, and he was incarcerated. The method of his death on February 12, 1872, remains a mystery, touted by some historians to have been an assassination or drowning during an escape, but one fact they seem to agree on is that Roye's ambition and idealism led to his demise.⁶

It is not known if Roye played a direct role in assisting fugitive slaves as they moved through Vigo County, either through the association with Allen Chapel, his business' proximity to the river, or just in hiring them as workers in a growing commercial entity. The colonization movement he strongly believed in did not receive the success it desired on both the state and national level, but logic leads us to believe that this Wabash Valley connection to the cause was their 'poster boy' — a model of the success that could be attained by moving to Liberia — a new land of liberty.

¹ Crenshaw. *Bury Me in a Free Land*, 13

² *Ibid.* 16

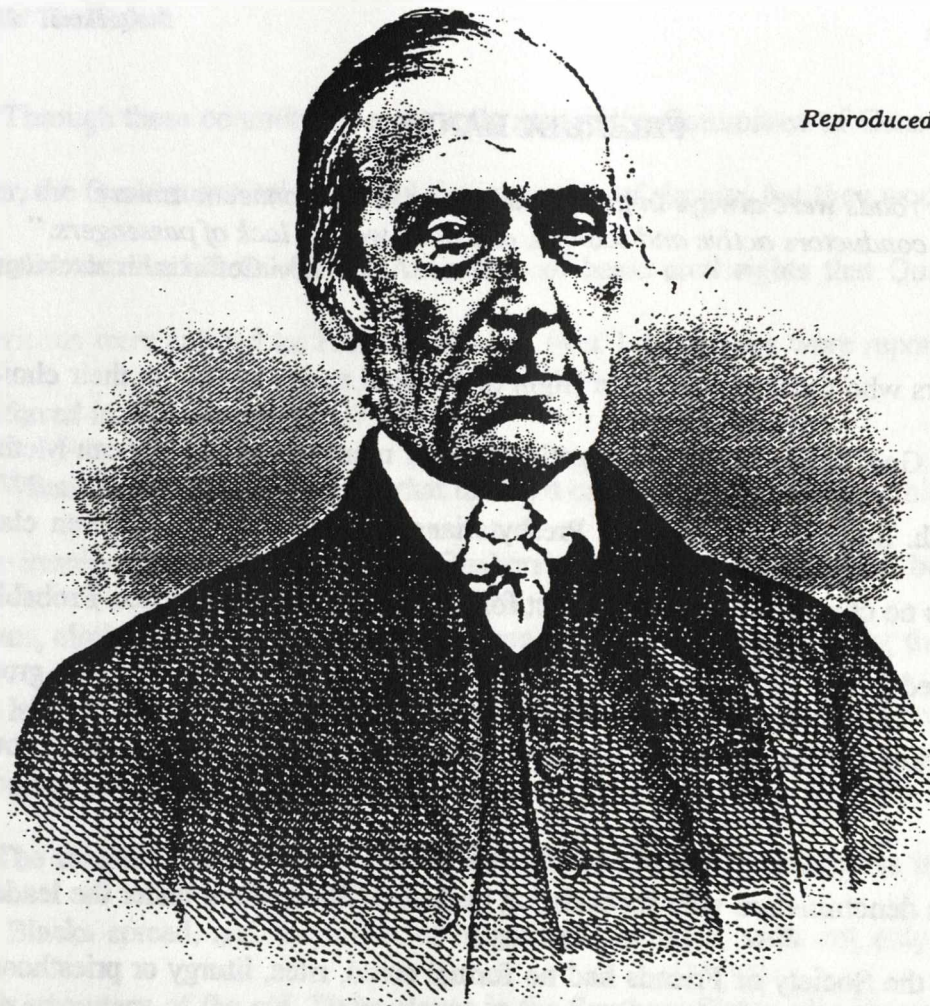
³ Mike McCormick. "Wabash Valley Profile: Edward J. Roye," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*. No date listed.

⁴ Mike McCormick. "Historical Perspective: Barber rises to lead Liberia," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*. No date listed.

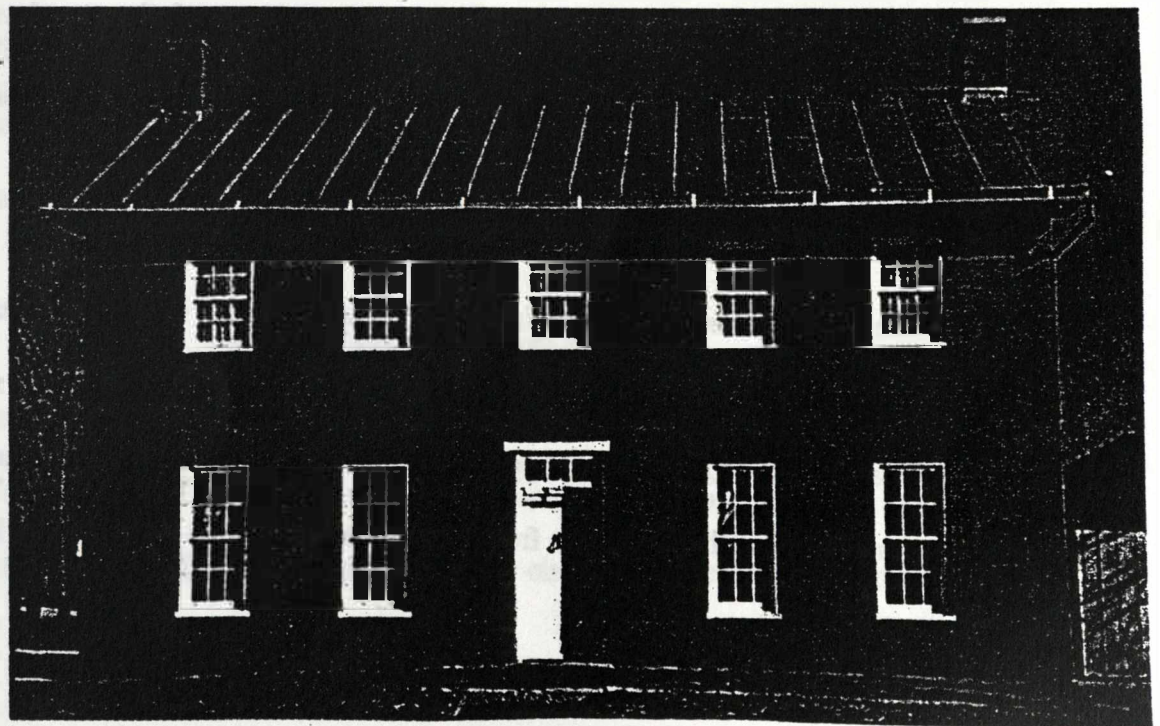
⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Mike McCormick. "Historical Perspective: Leader met untimely death", *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*. No date listed.

Levi Coffin
Reproduced from Levi Coffin, Reminiscences



Indiana Preservationist #1 January/February 2000



The Levi Coffin House

FRIENDLY HANDS

"The roads were always in good running order, the connections were good, the conductors active and zealous, and there was no lack of passengers."

Levi Coffin in his autobiography

The Hoosiers who assisted those in a flight to freedom varied widely in their choice of how to worship God. Some were Congregationalists or members of the African-Methodist Episcopal church. Some were Reformed Presbyterians or Methodists. Some even claimed they belonged to no church at all and were just following their own conscience. Probably the most who assisted in the flight were other African-Americans. But the best-known group of Whites who worked for the cause were known to be of the Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers.

A Christian denomination with roots dating back to 1630 England under the leadership of George Fox, the Society of Friends had no formal creed, rites, liturgy or priesthood and rejected violence in human relations, including war. Through the centuries, when they moved across the Atlantic Ocean spread their wings in the New World, the Mother Church maintained a philosophy of noninterference in matters relating to slavery and exercised passive resistance until the early 1800's when the issue began causing a rift within the Society ranks.

In North Carolina, state law hindered the emancipation of slaves and as with most other Southern states, bonds were required from owners who did free their slaves. In 1830 this law was amended to require those freed to be removed from the state within ninety (90) days of their release. The Quakers, unhappy with this new requirement, set up committees to transfer the trusteeship of these slaves – free men in their opinions – to bypass the law.

Through these committees, most aptly named the Committee of Concerns of People of Color, the Quakers not only opposed the institution of slavery, but they worked against those laws that deprived these African-Americans of basic civil rights that Quakers insisted all Americans were entitled to. From 1808-1826 over 1,400 slaves were reported to have been transferred in this manner.

When the Quakers discovered that the laws of Indiana, Illinois and Ohio had no barriers to the immigration of Free Blacks, the Quakers prepared to move them on, bearing the cost of wagons, clothing and food for traveling. Upon arrival in the new territory, the Quakers would then help men and women find jobs and homes and established schools and provided teachers to educate their children.

The stories of how well the newly-established Quaker communities in Indiana treated Free Blacks spread, and the influx of migration continued, with not only those freedmen taking advantage of the aid. Those slaves in the Southern States who did not have access to or could not wait for Quaker assistance began to filter into the Hoosier communities of Newport (now Fountain City), Richmond, Winchester and Orland. It was estimated that many more than the one person per township of the smaller communities such as Plainfield, Petersburg, Darlington, Bloomingdale or Rennselaer were involved in aiding runaways. These Quakers managed to carry on in such secrecy that few fugitive slaves were ever caught.

Among the first of the Society of Friends to take families out of North Carolina were the members of the Coffin family. Their family ties were extensive and could be traced back to the original Society in England. Many members of the clan held interesting roles in the

settlement and social movements of the early Americas: Judith Coffin was the mother of Benjamin Franklin; Lucretia Mott (a member of the Coffin line that first arrived at Nantucket in the 1640s) called the first Woman's Rights congress ever held with friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton; Mary Coffin Starbuck was perhaps the first woman in American to champion the cause of a woman's right to a political voice.¹ Vestal Coffin and his wife Aletha, who established one of the first "caravans" west, are credited by many with having created what was later called the Underground Railroad – although the actual name was said to have originated with a slave hunter in Kentucky.

Vestal's son Robert Addison, born in Guilford County, North Carolina, traveled with a group to western Indiana in 1843, further establishing the Quaker communities in Parke County and setting the course for many to obtain their freedom. He married Emily, the daughter of Alfred Hadley, a known Underground Railroad conductor and "station master" in Parke County. R. Addison is also known to have continued his UGRR ties through his second marriage to Ruth Hadley, Emily's cousin, in Hendrix County. He died on April 16, 1897, at Amo, Indiana, at the home of his daughter Ida Coffin Doan. In the years before his death, he published his memoirs and books on his extensive travels around the globe.²

But the Quaker most connected to the stories of the Underground Railroad in Indiana are connected to a Coffin cousin of Vestal's — Levi. Levi and his soon-to-be brother-in-law Benjamin White left North Carolina for the western banks of the Ohio River in 1822. Upon arrival in Richmond, Levi accepted a job teaching school for a short time. He then embarked on a new course to the west, traveling by horseback and carrying gold and silver coins to visit other Quaker communities. He relates in his autobiography about his stops in Mooresville, obtaining 80 acres of property in Morgan County for himself; in Greencastle, he just missed

his demise during a fierce storm by finding shelter in a log cabin; and on the Otter Creek prairie, having carefully dodging his way past fallen trees and storm-ravaged areas along the National Road.

When he arrived in Terre Haute, he deposited funds at the Terre Haute land office and proceeded south to the Quaker settlement at Honey Creek, where he was persuaded to remain and begin a school for the children of the growing community. It became such a success that he also began a Sunday school in the Honey Creek Quaker Meeting House where children from all denominations were invited to attend. During the summer vacation from the school, he and a cousin made an eight-day trek through the wilderness to Springfield, Illinois.³ Upon his return to western Indiana, he then journeyed onward to the settlement at Turman Creek in Sullivan County, before returning to Richmond and a trip back to North Carolina to wed his bride, Catharine.

In 1826 Levi, Catherine and young son Jesse returned to Indiana and set up a home in Newport (now called Fountain City). The business enterprises he entered into became quite successful and during the twenty years he and Catherine resided in the Ohio River valley, the family lived in very prosperous surroundings for the time. Each home had its own unusual features for hiding runaways, including an interior spring house which prevented onlookers from seeing how much water was used – a tactic bounty hunters used to check on the number of occupants in the home. By 1840, the Coffin family had moved into their fourth home, which later became known as the “Grand Central Station” of the Underground Railroad in Indiana.

Coffin claimed Newport (Fountain City) in 1826 was already well established as an Underground Railroad stop, mostly through the efforts of the Free Blacks and former slaves

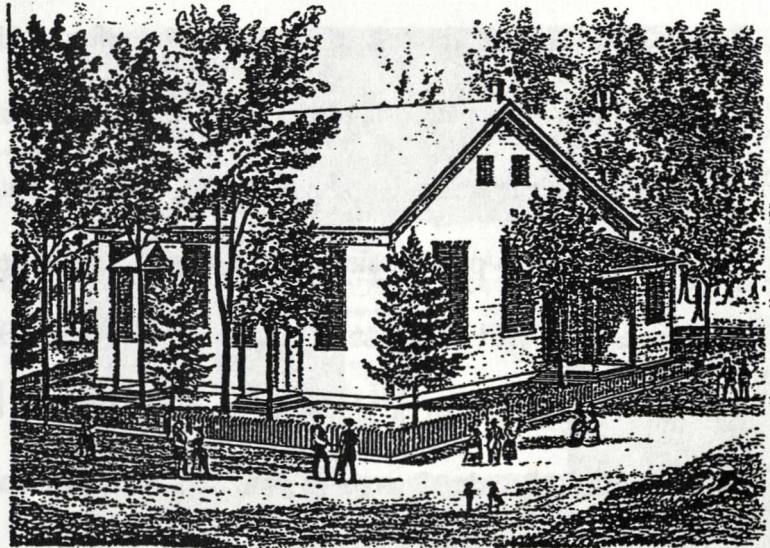
that had moved in to the area, but that many of the escaping fugitives and even some of the freedmen were easily caught due to a lack of funds and an unfamiliarity with the terrain and were sent back south. Once Coffin stepped in and began organizing the UGRR stations along the routes of the Ohio Valley, no one slave who escaped with his assistance was ever recaptured. He relates in his autobiography that he once aided a party of 17 runaways for two days in his home and that under the cover of a funeral procession, he and Catherine assisted 28 escaping fugitives from Cincinnati and that during their twenty year residence in Newport, at least once a week he sheltered fugitives.

In 1847 the Coffin's moved to Cincinnati, but continued with clandestine activities to move those seeking freedom from slavery. It is logical to assume that they connected with a young woman author whose family was also known to be anti-slavery — Harriet Beecher Stowe. It is reported that the Quakers in Harriet's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were modeled after the Coffin's and that even Eliza was one of the runaways they were known to have aided. Levi remained in Cincinnati where he died on September 16, 1877.

Other than in his autobiography, references of Coffin's accomplishments in the Wabash River Valley are largely overshadowed by his work on the eastern border of the state. But during that short time on the western border, he set into motion alliances to put the Quaker communities here on the station maps of the Underground Railroad. The network he established through out Indiana endured and was instrumental in establishing the western route of the Underground Railroad.

While only connected to the Coffins by friendship and later through marriage, one of the most influential Quakers involved in the Underground Railroad movement in western

Indiana was Alfred Hadley. Not one of the founding Quakers in western Indiana, this friend of Vestal Coffin, with his wife Rhoda and their three children, came out of Guilford County, North Carolina, in 1830.⁴ After living a short time in Morgan County, they moved westward to Parke County. Alfred had served as a teacher and later studied and practiced both law and medicine and became the County Surveyor in North Carolina, skills of which he put to good use in the new settlement of Bloomingdale. He recognized that the territory had excellent resources and labored at developing them for good use. At one time he owned a stock company, and at another he was the producer of the largest yield of corn per acre in the entire state.



But at his core, Alfred was a reformer, not impetuous and fanatical, but cool and calculating, pursuing the object of his goal with definite determination. Rhoda, a lady who loved liberty for all, partnered him well – both having an eternal hatred for slavery gained during their life in the South.⁵

The Hadleys maintained an Underground Railroad station in their home and used a log cabin tucked in the trees on their farm as a hiding place for fugitives making their way up the western side of the state. They set up an alliance of friends and other Quakers who assisted in moving the fugitives northward, one of whom was Dr. Horace Cannon, whose active participation in the movement, along with his medical abilities, often saved the lives of the freedom seekers, even while endangering his own.⁶

The work of the Hadleys and their fellow Quakers also pitted the Quakers sense of social justice against the actuality of the laws of the State. In 1847, Dr. Cannon, Albert G. Coffin, William Morris, James K. Steele, and James Siler were indicted by the State on the charge of "harboring a Negro."⁷ Charges against Coffin, Morris and Steele were summarily dismissed (although Steele was fined twenty-five dollars for failure to appear)⁸ and Siler was tried and found not guilty.⁹ But Dr. Cannon had employed one of the freed slaves to help clear a field on his property and for this offense, the court found him guilty and assessed a fine of ten dollars, along with the costs of the prosecution – amounting to an additional sixteen dollars and twenty-seven cents. He appealed the decision, but was overruled.¹⁰ Hadley and other Friends offered to pay the fines, but Cannon refused and the money had to be collected by sale of a large part of his stock, horses and cattle.¹¹ His refusal to admit to committing a crime in the plight of a slave left a large imprint on many in the close-knit Quaker communities of Parke County, as well as on his own son Joe, who later went on to serve as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

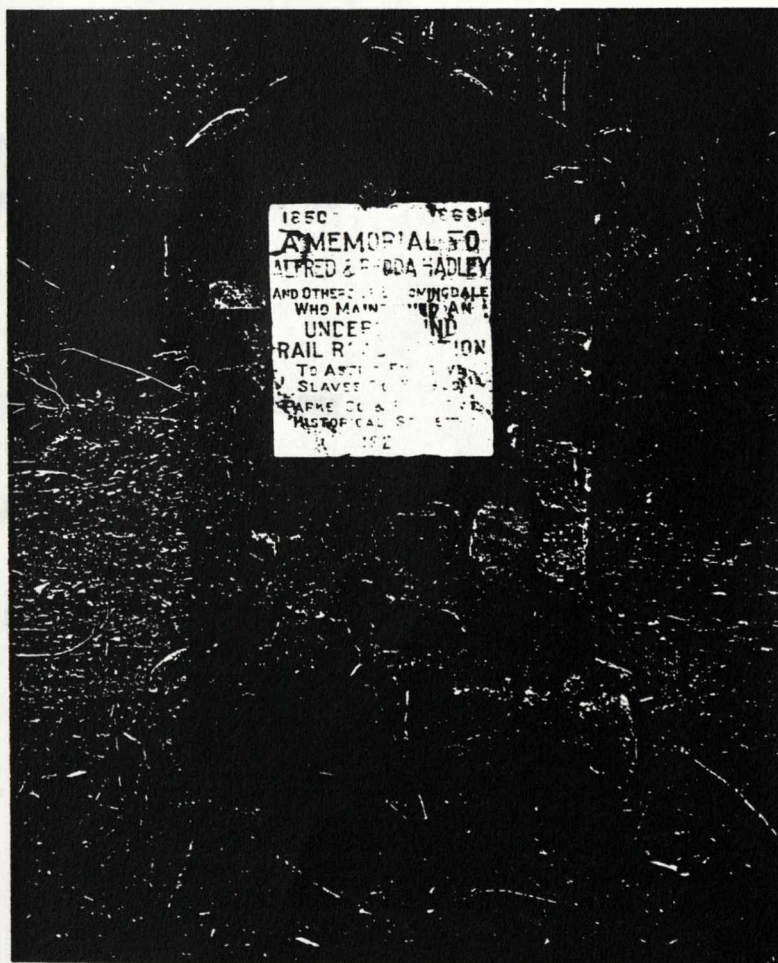
A true believer in education, Alfred Hadley became one of the founders of the Western Manual Labor School – later called the Bloomingdale Academy. He and others, including James Siler, also set up other schools in the area, including one for the children of the African-Americans in the area at Leatherwood Creek. He assisted in teaching small children by making a primer and a primary grammar.¹² He was strongly sympathetic to the Friends principles against slavery, war and intemperance and peace was the next greatest principle he focused on.

Life-long members of the Society of Friends, Alfred and Rhoda Hadley lived to see the triumph of their work and the cause they espoused, even though they had suffered

humiliations and loss of property. Alfred died in Bloomingdale in 1874 at the age of 74. Rhoda, who was five years younger, passed away in 1892. Both were buried in the community where they had made their mark and later a marker, made of stones from all of the farms whose owners had partnered with the Hadleys in their protest against slavery, was placed near the farm where so many had hidden in their quest for a new life. [Note: *The Hadleys' and Dr. Horace Cannon's role in the UGRR of Western Indiana are also covered in in the section on Parke County.*]

1850 1863
**A MEMORIAL TO
 ALFRED & RHODA HADLEY
 AND OTHERS OF
 BLOOMINGDALE
 WHO MAINTAINED AN
 UNDERGROUND
 RAILROAD STATION
 TO ASSIST FUGITIVE
 SLAVES TO FREEDOM
 PARKE CO. & PENN TWP.
 HISTORICAL SOCIETYS
 1926**

Blockprint from Atlas Map of Parke County
 Compiled, Drawn & Published by
 A.T. Andreas, 1874
 Photo of memorial by Berky Davis



¹ Charles Davis. "Will the Real Robert Addison Coffin Please Stand Up!" *Indiana Canals, Journal of the Canal Society of Indiana*. Vol 11 No. 1 Winter, 2000. 32

² *Ibid.* 30-31

³ Mike McCormick. "Historical Perspective: Levi Coffin started first Sunday School in Vigo County," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, February 21, 1999.

⁴ Paul E. Lehman, "The Underground Railroad in Parke County." December 15, 1958. Rockville Public Library archives. 1-2

⁵ Parke County Historical Society. "Historical Sketch of Parke County". *Combined 1874 Atlas, 1908 Atlas, 1916 Isaac Straus Centennial Memorial and Name Index of Parke County*. Windmill Publications, Mt. Vernon IN., 1994 reproduction.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Parke County Circuit Court, *Civil Order Book* August, 1845 to October, 1849. Vol. IV. 244-246

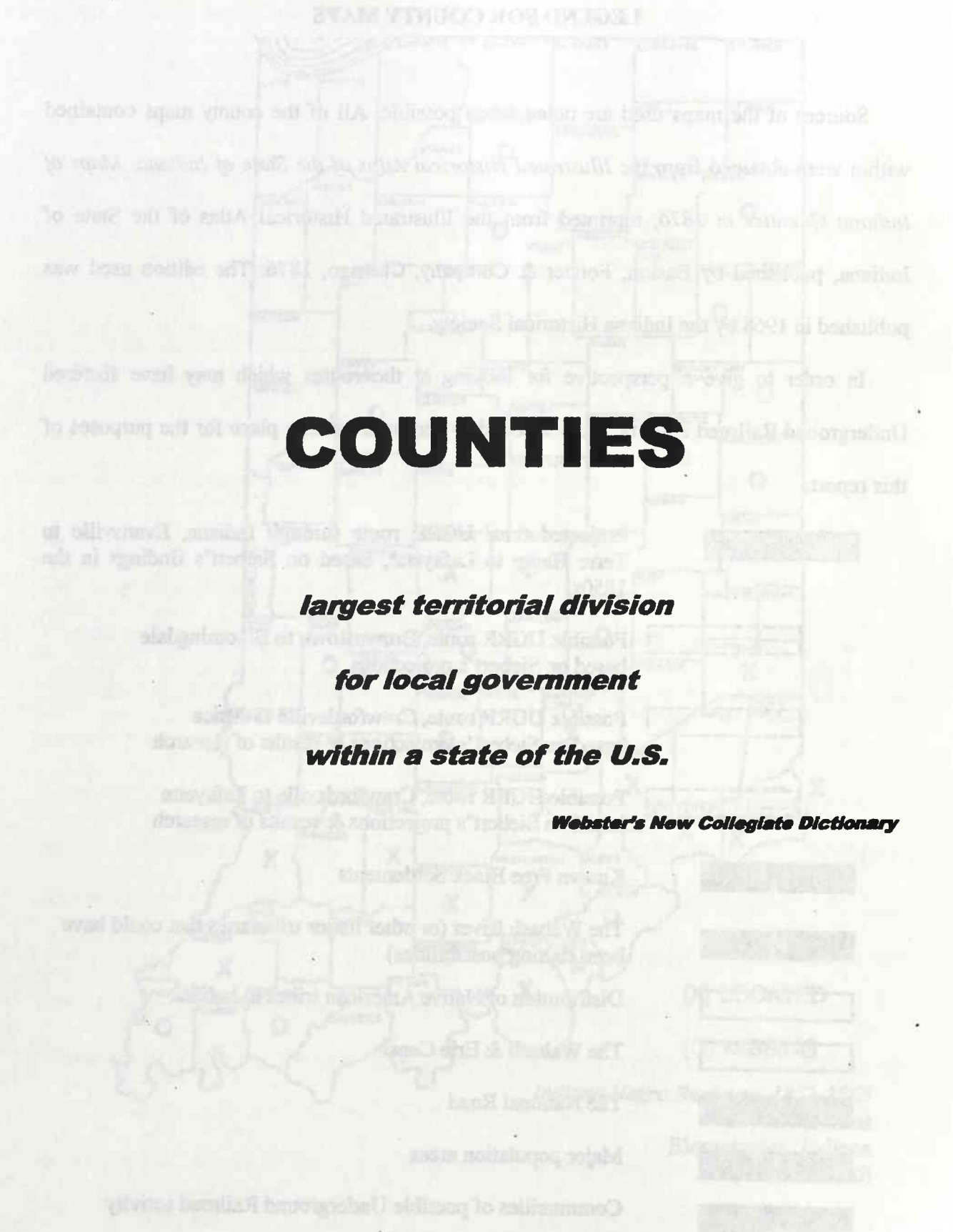
⁸ *Ibid.* 288

⁹ *Ibid.* 296

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 355

¹¹ Lehman, *The Underground Railroad in Parke County*, 10

¹² Parke County Historical Society. "Historical Sketch of Parke County"



COUNTIES

largest territorial division

for local government

within a state of the U.S.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

LEGEND FOR COUNTY MAPS

Sources of the maps used are noted when possible. All of the county maps contained within were obtained from the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Indiana, Maps of Indiana Counties in 1876*, reprinted from the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Indiana*, published by Baskin, Forster & Company, Chicago, 1876. The edition used was published in 1968 by the Indiana Historical Society.

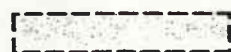
In order to give a perspective for looking at the routes which may have fostered Underground Railroad activity, a color-coded system was set into place for the purposes of this report:



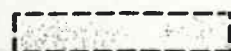
Projected third UGRR route through Indiana, Evansville to Terre Haute to Lafayette, based on Siebert's findings in the 1850s



Possible UGRR route, Brownstown to Bloomington based on Siebert's projections



Possible UGRR route, Crawfordsville to Attica based on Siebert's projections & results of research



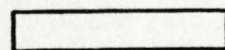
Possible UGRR route, Crawfordsville to Lafayette based on Siebert's projections & results of research



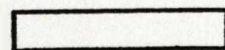
Known Free Black Settlements



The Wabash River (or other major tributaries that could have been routing possibilities)



Distribution of Native American tribes in Indiana



The Wabash & Erie Canal



The National Road

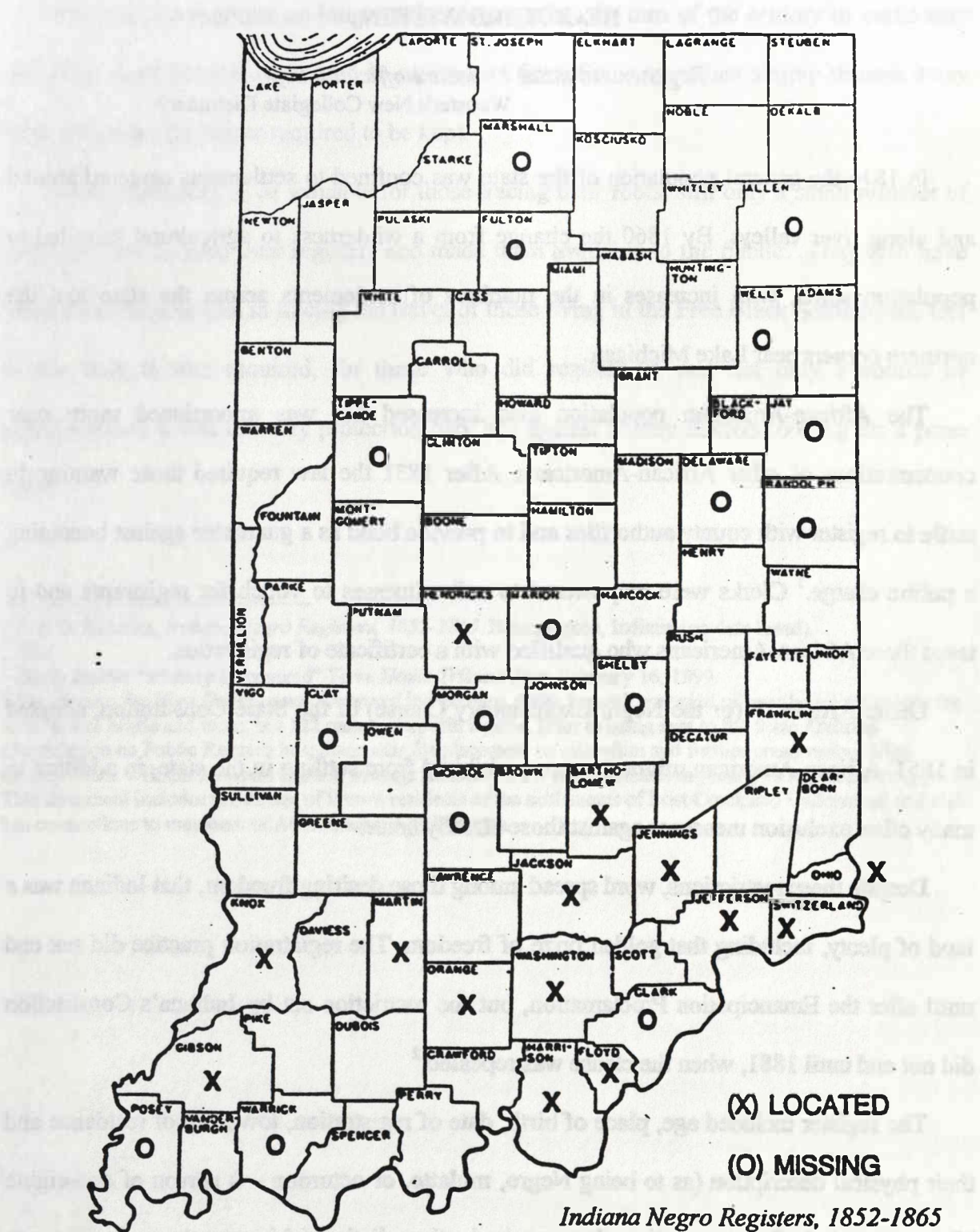


Major population areas



Communities of possible Underground Railroad activity

LOCATION OF NEGRO REGISTERS 1852-1865



(X) LOCATED

(O) MISSING

Indiana Negro Registers, 1852-1865

Coy D. Robbins

Bloomington, Indiana

(no date listed)

REGISTERS WITHIN

Register: to make or secure official entry

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

In 1816 the general population of the state was confined to settlements centered around and along river valleys. By 1860 the change from a wilderness to agricultural state led to population shifts, with increases in the numbers of settlements across the state and the northern corners near Lake Michigan.

The African-American population also increased but was apportioned more near concentrations of other African-Americans. After 1831 the law required those wanting to settle to register with county authorities and to provide bond as a guarantee against becoming a public charge.¹ Clerks were empowered to call witnesses to vouch for registrants and to issue those African-Americans who qualified with a certificate of registration.

Under Article 13 (or the Negro Exclusionary Clause) of the State Constitution, adopted in 1851, African-American migrants were prohibited from settling in the state, in addition to many other exclusion measures against those already here.

Despite these restrictions, word spread among those desiring freedom, that Indiana was a land of plenty, including that golden prize of freedom. The registration practice did not end until after the Emancipation Proclamation, but the restriction set by Indiana's Constitution did not end until 1881, when the clause was repealed.²

The register included age, place of birth, date of registration, township of residence and their physical description (as to being Negro, mulatto, or octoroon – a person of one-eighth Negro ancestry). Some counties also required other distinguishing marks such as scars, height and weight. It was said that no matter what you might look like, however much “Black” blood you had made you a Negro.³

Many of the registers no longer exist, destroyed at the turn of the century to make way for other court records or burned in courthouse fires. Some were just simply thrown away after they were no longer required to be kept.

Now considered to be valuable for those tracing their roots, still only a small number of counties have located their registers and made them available to the public.⁴ They also have become a valuable tool in tracing the travel of those living in the Free Black Settlements. But at the time it was required, for those who did register, it was not only a source of identification, it was the only protection they had against bounty hunters looking for a prize catch.

¹ Coy D. Robbins, *Indiana Negro Registers, 1852-1865*. Bloomington, Indiana (no date listed).

² *Ibid.*

³ Cindy Dobbs. "History Uncovered" *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, February 16, 1999.

⁴ The register for Vigo County was discovered in February, 1999, beneath a myriad of courthouse records in the attic. It was brittle and worn, but 122 names were still legible. Prior to being sent to the State Archives Commission on Public Records in Indianapolis for placement on microfilm and further preservation, Vigo County Clerk William Mansard had the writings transcribed for distribution to anyone who requested a copy. This document includes the names of known residents of the settlements of Lost Creek and Underwood and also has connections to members of Allen Chapel AME Church.

CLAY COUNTY

The area later named Clay County was part of the lands given over from the Delaware, Miami and Potawatomi tribes in the 1809 treaty signed by Governor Harrison. The first settler was said to be David Thomas, who traveled from Owen County to establish a homestead in 1818.¹ Forests and prairie grasses dominated the scenery, but pioneer life could be seen with cabins built here and there.



Early settlements cropped up near the Eel River and its feeder tributaries and a county seat was established at Bowling Green when the area was formally organized from territory taken from Vigo, Owen and Sullivan counties in February, 1825, soon after the seat of state government moved from Corydon to Indianapolis. Named for "The Great Compriser," famed Virginia orator Henry Clay, (1777-1852) it consisted of elevated lands of the Wabash Valley but its general surface was neither level or hilly.²

In 1832, surveying began for the proposed twelve and one-half miles of the National Road. When completed it traversed the county from the northeast by way of Williamsburg, at the time the only town north of Bowling Green, rolling westward into Vigo County. The Road afforded migration, especially after the influx of covered wagons seeking the new found gold out West. But it did not have a major effect on the county until after the change of county seats.³

A summit divide between the Wabash and White Rivers existed in the county when the construction of the Wabash & Erie Canal was scheduled. Actual building of the canal began in 1837, but owing to financial difficulties, work ceased in 1839. People living in the area along the proposed line agitated area legislators until work resumed in 1847, but acts of vandalism dominated the period of its existence in Clay County.⁴

The population of the county prior to the creation of the National Road and the Canal was estimated at 1,816. By 1840 it had grown to 5,567, to 12,121 in 1860, and 19,084 in census taken after the end of the Civil War in 1870.⁵

As with any settlement area, religion played a large role in the county. Methodists dominated the denominations vying for the attention of the settlers. Old School Presbyterians were strong in the late 1850s and United Brethren were scattered among the rural settlements. An A.M.E. church was gathered in Brazil, but not until 1898.⁶

One interesting event occurred in 1845, when debating societies were in vogue and public discussions of the Bible were held between the Church of Christ and the Methodist Episcopal denominations. One of the most unique questions posed was on the origin of the Black man, to be debated during the month of March, 1861. M. D. Brackney had stated "he [the Negro] was the direct descendant of the devil."⁷ F. B. Yocum, a minister of the Christian church, was to present opposition. On the night of the proposed debate, Yocum appeared on time; Brackney never arrived.⁸ The debate was not listed as being rescheduled.

"Next to his church, the group to which the average Negro was attached was his lodge or fraternal organization."⁹ Belonging to such groups gave them status among their peers. Some Masonic organizations were known to have been founded before the Civil War, but disbanded in the move from rural to city areas. Several such organizations listed as "Negro"

were shown as existing in Brazil, but most of their activities are listed as occurring after the end of the war and into the later decades of the 1800s. Names such as William Green, Edwin Moss, John Doles, Elias Potter, Luther Mitchell, L.B. Russell, A.T. Griffin, Foster Barnett, A.B. York, J. W. Holt, W.P. Coleman, and John T. Smith were listed among the Knights Templar, Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias. An Order of the Eastern Star was also listed as "Negro" with the names Maggie Ross, Mattie Baxter, Mary Waldren, Nancy York.¹⁰

Accurate accounting of the number of African-Americans living in the area, how they arrived or any type of biographical sketch was not found in the documents perused for this report. Seibert's map of Underground Railroad routes [frontispiece] shows a distinct line of travel through the county, a derivation off of the central route through the state, and heading northwest into Parke County, supposedly cutting through the city of Brazil. Even recently there have been reports of some sites supposedly relating to Underground Railroad activity along the National Road and through the towns of Poland and Bowling Green where the route would have crossed over from Owen County. However, most of these reports are based on conjecture and rumors, and any actual verification has yet to be found.

Photo of Henry Clay from website: *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress*

¹ William Travis. *History of Clay County*. Vol. I & II. (Lewis Publishing Co., New York, 1909) 1

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid* 36

⁴ *Ibid*. 39

⁵ *Ibid*. 190

⁶ *Ibid*. 389-397

⁷ *Ibid* 175-6

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Emma Thornburgh. *Bury Me in a Free Land*, 158

¹⁰ William Travis, *History of Clay County*, 133

FOUNTAIN COUNTY

Fountain County, organized in 1826, was named in honor of Major Fontaine, of the Kentucky Volunteers, who was killed in an Indian battle on the Maumee River. The Wabash River makes up Fountain County's western border with Vermillion and Warren counties. One of the first settlements was that of Bethel, established by the Quakers. They had come from North and South Carolina, via Ohio, and entered the territory as soon as land was opened up in 1824. Very dense timber and three or four large swamps covered most of the ground. Water was often knee-deep to waist-deep year round and they were full of tussocks. The brush grew so thick that their shade covered the water and was so dense that the sun could not shine through.¹

The Quakers believed the swamps could be used as hiding places for fugitive slaves, coming up through Parke County and so a few cabins were built at the swamps' edge. An advantage to using the swamps was that bloodhounds being used to track the fugitives would lose the scent when they reached the water. The Quaker settlement just to the south of the swamps would furnish food and clothing and would point them in the direction of the next station.

There were rumored to be as many as 100 fugitives living in the woods at one time during the period of 1826 until the outbreak of the Civil War and that no fugitive slave that got to the Bethel station was ever taken captive. While a majority of the slaves had moved northward along the UGRR, some families remained until the late 1890s.

One such family was that of Alec Simpson, a man of great physical strength, had come to the area with his wife, a preacher who would minister in the cabins on Sunday afternoons. Their grandson James Alexander ("Jim") Jackson was the last known representative of this

community.² He was born in Attica on June 8, 1865, and lived the majority of his life in the territory, working as a chauffeur and handy man for Fred S. Purnell, U.S. Representative (1917-1933) who was born in Attica in 1882. Jim was well-liked and when he became blind in the latter part of his life, the citizens of Attica looked after him. He married Rebecca Curtissee, also from the swamp community, and reportedly had two children, but no further record of them was found. Jim died in September, 1955, in Logansport and is buried at the Riverside Cemetery.³

The Simpsons and about eight or ten other families made up the Bethel Settlement. It has been said that their sole purpose in remaining in the area was to be of assistance to their brethren on the flight to freedom and it is interesting that after the end of the Civil War, a majority of the families left, and no record of their destination has been located.⁴

One of these settlers was a man named Billy Jefferson, who moved to Danville, Illinois, disheartened and feeling disgraced after his son killed another member of the swamp community.⁵

Also of note from this settlement was Ben Moore. Reportedly he had been the servant of Davy Crockett, who died at the Alamo in the historic siege against Santa Ana's Mexican armies in 1836. Ben was the only Negro captured along with three white women and two white children. Escaping from the Mexicans, he made his way back to Tennessee and Kentucky and at the start of the Civil War headed north to Canada. At 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighing 316 pounds, he was one of the most powerful men to arrive in Attica. The 1880 census lists Ben and his wife Julia as farmers in Davis Township. Several children were also listed, all having been born in Fountain County. One of his sons, who copied his father's physique, was caught stealing money and jailed. After the sheriff had left, the young Moore

broke out, leaving a hole in the stone floor when he broke the iron door that was expected to hold him in. He is said to have escaped back through the swamps and was not heard from.⁶

Bethel Church was the focal point for station operations. Nearby there were several houses reported to have false walls or staircases that swung out to hide fugitives. Some of the houses no longer exist, and if still standing, owners have not been approached for permission to view them. The church itself was the first and most prominent fixture of the community. While established by Quakers, in 1829 the structure housed the Methodist Episcopal community and a new building replaced the former log one in 1830. Until 1871 Bethel Church was the only one in the area and operated the only school within two townships. (The present church building was built in 1850 and was used by the Methodists until the 1930s, when it became an independent, non-denominational community church. Since 1967 it has been the only active church in the same area.)⁷

The Methodists of Bethel were said to be the largest congregation in the state. They established a Freedmen's Aid Society and during the Reconstruction period took strong political stances on the issues of the day.

Attached to the church is the Bethel Cemetery. The graves are known to date back to 1833, but since settlers arrived in the area at least 10 years earlier, the cemetery is probably much older. Twenty-two Civil War veterans are buried here, including two soldiers of the 28th United States Colored Troops: Cyrus Adams, Co. E. and Allen Edwards, Co. B. (The 28th U.S.C.T., consisting of men from Indian, acted heroically at the Battle of the Crater at Petersburg.) At least five other African-Americans are buried in the cemetery, in a section that was once segregated. As the cemetery was enlarged, this section became a center area, bordering one of the driveways. Listed on the National Register with the church, this

cemetery is one of the few of the Civil War eras in which African-Americans were buried together with Whites, especially some of the most prominent citizens of the community.⁸

In 1824 a small group of families, dedicated to free thought, moved to Fountain County from Ohio and established a settlement on the banks of Coal Creek in Van Buren township. One of the leaders was William Ludlow, a surveyor who had traveled the Midwest, was holding to the conviction that society as a whole should "Ameliorate the condition of man by destroying individual aspirations for wealth, and establish a system of equal rights and privileges upon that estimable principal of doing to others as we should do unto us."⁹ The precept was that in order to ensure free and equal rights for all, including women and African-Americans, society had to start over and begin with something new.¹⁰ These thoughts and goals, practiced as the Church of God, did not thrive to his liking in Fountain



County, any more than they had in Ohio. Disheartened by this, Ludlow left the area, deeding his lands over to his wife and made his way south, joining Robert Owen's new utopian society at a place called New Harmony in southern Indiana. Joseph Ludlow took over care of the land when his father left and descendants of the family are said to still remain the area.¹¹

Jonathan Crane, Isaac Romine and Oliver Osborn and a few other members of the original group from Ohio remained along the banks of Coal Creek on what became known as Osborn's Prairie. While others of the society moved into other areas, Crane is known to have remained with his wife Keziah Tappan and many of their nine children. He died in 1863 and is buried in Fountain Cemetery. No record was found on any definitive activities relating to

possible involvement in the Underground Railroad movement, but owing to the ideology they followed, it may be that they were.

Edward "Ned" Allan Hannegan was born in Cincinnati in 1807 and grew up in Kentucky. He came under the influences of Col. Marshall Key, nephew of Chief Justice John Marshall, while working as a clerk for him on the Key plantation. A frequent visitor to the Key home was daughter Elizabeth's teacher, the daughter of the president of Lane Theological Seminary – Harriet Beecher Stowe. Hannegan must have had some interest conversations about his work at the plantation with his classmates at Transylvania University at Lexington, especially with the young Jefferson Davis.¹²

In 1827 Hannegan moved to Indiana to practice law, first living in Vincennes and after marriage, to Terre Haute. Relocating to Warren County in 1829, he was admitted to the Indiana Bar. When elected as a state prosecuting attorney, Covington in Fountain County became his home base. In 1835 he was elected to Congress for the first of two terms and after some later election losses, Hannegan became a U.S. Senator. He spoke out on the slavery issue, but considered abolitionists as "trouble-making busy bodies."¹³

Hannegan continued his flamboyant oratory, not only in Washington, D.C., but also as U.S. minister to Prussia in March, 1849. For whatever reasons, by October of that same year, he was back in the Wabash Valley, resuming the practice of law.

In 1852, while in the midst of a campaign for the presidency, a drunken Hannegan stabbed and killed his brother-in-law at a wedding reception. Although no charges were found by a Fountain County grand jury, his campaign run was over. In 1859, still despondent by the death of his wife Margaret in 1857, Edward Hannegan died of an overdose. President

Lincoln was said to have been very upset by the death of his friend, and tributes came from some of the most prominent notables of the Wabash Valley, including Judge Samuel B. Gookins, Amory Kinney, Daniel Voorhees and Lew Wallace. Having lived a colorful and often flamboyant career, the man known as the "Baron of Covington" was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in Terre Haute.¹⁴



Renowned Indiana statesman Daniel Voorhees came to Fountain County in 1827 at the age of two months when his family settled in Covington. He attended Asbury College (an anti-slavery institution now known as DePauw University) and studied law, entering the Indiana Bar in 1851. In 1852, he was hired as a junior partner by Edward Allen Hannegan. He was likely influenced by Hannegan's view on the slavery issue, and in 1858 Voorhees defended John Cook, a follower of John Brown.¹⁵

Known to be one of the best orators to come from the Midwest, Voorhees was elected to serve the state as both representative and senator in the U.S. Congress. He died in Washington, D.C. in 1897 and was buried in Terre Haute. Tomes have been written about Voorhees, thus his mention, like that of Hannegan's, is only to show connections to Fountain County and anti-slavery issues.

Photo of New Harmony marker taken by Marlene Lu

Photo of Daniel Voorhees from website: *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress*

¹ J. Wesley Whicker, "The Underground Railroad," *Historical Sketches of the Wabash Valley* (By the author, Attica, Indiana, 1916) 92

² *Ibid.* 93

³ Correspondence from Betty Jaynes Clawson, October 10, 1999, taken from attachment to National Register Nomination for Bethel Church, April, 1994.

⁴ Whicker, *Historical Sketches of the Wabash Valley*, 93

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 94

⁷ Nomination for Bethel Church & Cemetery. National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet. Section #8 Page 5.

⁸ Nomination for Bethel Church & Cemetery. National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet. Section #8 Page 10.

⁹ Thomas Hamm. *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846.* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1995) 140

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *History of Fountain County*, Fountain County Historical Society, 1983.

¹² Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: Edward Allen Hannegan, Part I," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, September 10, 2000.

¹³ Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: Edward Allen Hannegan, Part II," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, September 17, 2000

¹⁴ Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: Edward Allen Hannegan, Part V – Conclusion," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, October 15, 2000

¹⁵ *History of Fountain County.*

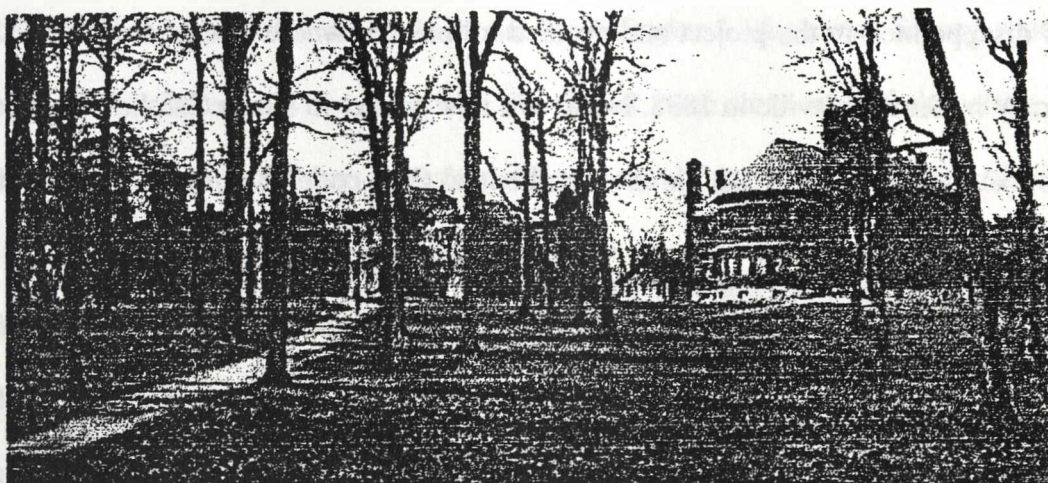
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

In 1820 Montgomery County was a wilderness that had been largely inhabited by several Native American tribes of the Illinois and Miami confederacies (Potawatami, Kickapoo, Shawnee, Delaware, Wea).¹ With the Wabash River to its west, Sugar Creek was the largest body of water to traverse the county.

In 1822 the county was organized and named for the Irish-born Brigadier General Richard Montgomery of Revolutionary War fame. In 1824 land sales brought a large influx of immigrants, mostly from Kentucky and Ohio. A county seat was established at Crawfordsville in 1825 and by 1835 10,000 people were reported as residents of the county, with 17 listed as "colored."²

In 1835, eight churches were known to be organized and holding services, with two of these being "colored" (Baptist and African-Methodist Episcopal). The largest of the denominations was Catholic, with concentrations located in Crawfordsville and Ladoga. Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians were also holding worship. A small group of the Society of Friends also established a settlement at the village of Darlington.³

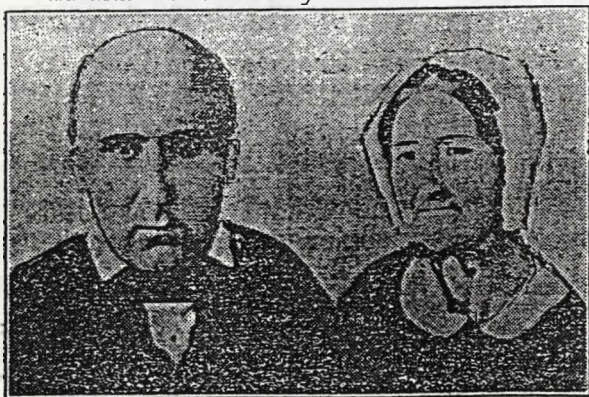
In 1832 a group of Presbyterians, led by Caleb Mills, minister, established a school for men patterned after the conservative liberal arts colleges of New England, including their high standards on learning, virtue and service.⁴ The Free Methodists also were involved in the establishment of Wabash College, denouncing the colonization movement and calling for equal education opportunities.⁵ It was rumored that the college supposedly accepted an African-American as a student, so it was considered aligned with the abolitionists, but this has not be documented as fact.



In 1861 Joseph Tuttle was elected as president of Wabash College. Even as a young man growing up in New Jersey, he had a desire for the intellectual culture. After graduating with honors from Marietta College in 1841, he began a course in theology at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, under the tutelage of Dr. Lyman Beecher. Licensed as a Presbyterian minister in 1844, he was a pastor in Ohio and New Jersey, but gained renown as an elaborate author of articles and tomes on various subjects.⁶ It is very plausible, when looking at the list of names of those who attended Wabash, and the abolitionist ties that Dr. Beecher may have instilled in Tuttle, that school may have played some role in the Underground Railroad activities known to have occurred in the Crawfordsville area.

The most notable Underground Railroad activity in Montgomery County revolved around a Scottish immigrant named John Allen Speed. Speed, a skilled stonemason, came to America in 1828. His wife Margaret and their child arrived one year later. Moving from Philadelphia to Virginia, then on to Washington, D.C., he labored on several public buildings, including the Capitol and the White House.⁷ When he learned of a new project for a state capitol in the western city of Indianapolis, he journeyed to Indiana in 1834. But he

was disappointed in the project and decided to look elsewhere around the state, ending his journey in Crawfordsville in 1838. News of a new project in North Carolina reached him, so he set out on foot to Raleigh via the Cumberland Gap, completed the work and returned to Indiana the same way.



During his absence Margaret had purchased land in the growing town of Crawfordsville. Speed became superintendent of a new macadamized national road in eastern Vigo County, but when appropriation

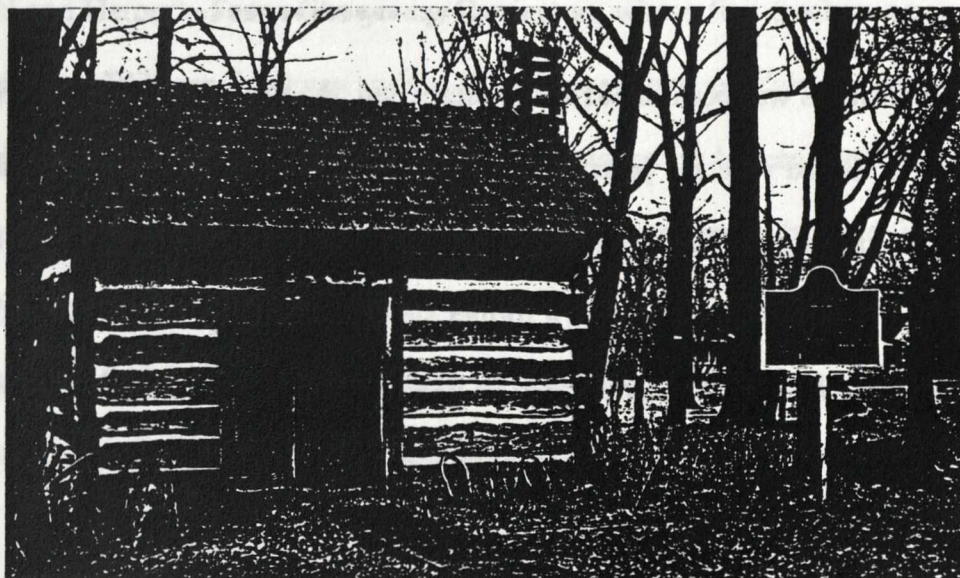
difficulties cropped up, he left the project and returned to Crawfordsville.⁸

Speed was said to be a man of morals, liberal in thinking and strict in integrity. While he at first favored the radical Jacksonian Democrats, he later became an intense abolitionist, to the extent that when an abolitionist candidate ran for the presidency, he and fellow abolitionist Fisher Doherty were said to have cast the only votes in the county in support of the man.⁹ Speed supposedly gained his sympathies for the slaves during his residence in Virginia, where during a revolt by a group of slaves, he was drafted to help put it out by a force of arms. The treatment of the slaves afterwards, including 22 who were shot, to which Speed was a witness, changed his way of thinking on the issue.

Of their five children, son Sidney, born in Crawfordsville in 1846, finds notable mention here. After attending Wabash College in 1860-61, in 1862 he enlisted in the 18th Ind. Bat. where he served three years, fighting at Cumberland and later returning to Crawfordsville in 1865.

In a 1913 interview for an issue of the *New England Magazine*, Sidney reported on instances of his father's involvement with the UGRR. One story told of sheltering a young mulatto girl in the garret of their log cabin at Walnut and Spring Sts. in Crawfordsville. Due to her former master and other bounty hunters in pursuit of her, an elaborate plan was hatched to make her escape possible. She was dressed as a heavily veiled, well-to-do woman, and with a borrowed white child and a young Negro girl along as a servant, she boarded a train bound for Detroit. Although she was shocked and frightened to find her former master on the train, she kept her composure when she realized that he did not recognize her and after boarding the ferry to Canada, she lifted her veils and bid him farewell.¹⁰

Although not a politician by nature, John Speed became the second Mayor of Crawfordsville just after Civil War. He died in 1873, with little worldly goods to show for his work. Margaret followed him in death in 1879. Both are buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Crawfordsville.¹¹ After years of neglect and decay, the Speed cabin where had he acted as a "UGRR station operator and conductor" was reconstructed by the Montgomery County Historical Society on the grounds of the former mansion of Henry S. Lane, a fellow abolitionist, congressman, governor and Civil War senator.¹²



Another name to note here is that of Major General Lew Wallace, son of Indiana's 6th governor and later the state's adjutant general, who had seen action in several major Civil War battles.

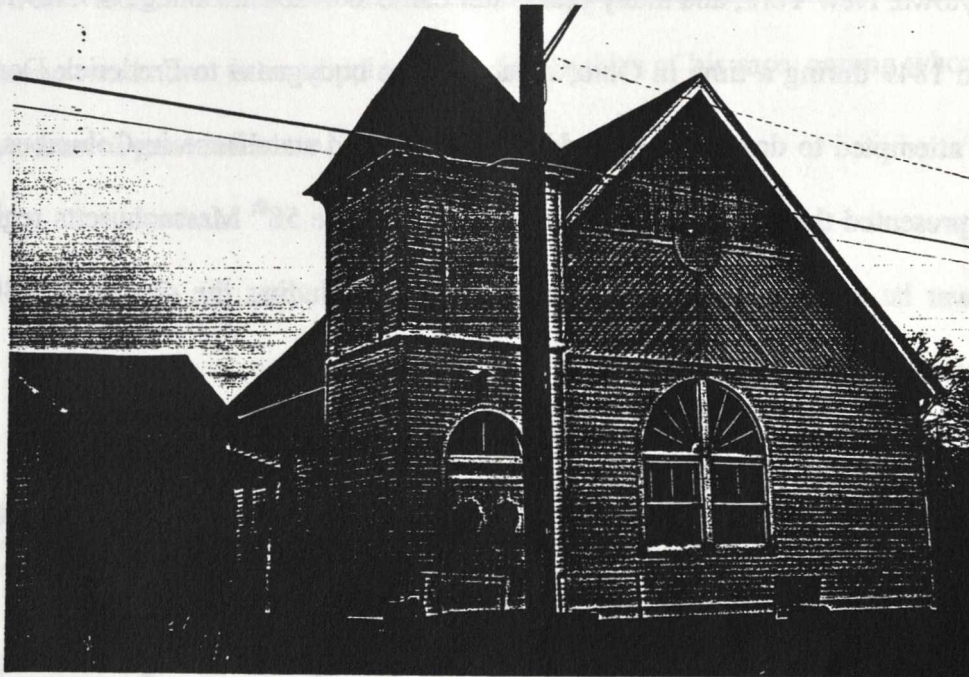
As a young man who moved from Indianapolis to Covington in Fountain County to be closer to the Crawfordsville home of his fiancée, Susan Elston. Lawyer Wallace became fast friends with Edward Allan Hannegan, who had also hired a junior partner named Daniel Voorhees.

It was at the wedding of Wallace and Ms. Elston that Hannegan fatally stabbed Capt. John R. Duncan. Being the prosecutor, a young Wallace was pressured to file criminal charges against his idol. When the grand jury handed down a "No Bill" on a count of manslaughter, voters were urged by the press to oust him from office. However, he was re-elected, and went on to greater fame as a war hero, and author of the famed novel *Ben Hur*.¹³

Wallace's father-in-law Maj. Elston, Dr. Emmons, Noah Grimes and Fisher Doherty, were rumored to have been confederates of John Speed in the task of getting former slaves to freedom. But little has been found to substantiate these claims.

Robert Jones was born in 1818 in Butler, Ohio, the son of Free Blacks John and Dorothy Jones. He moved with his parents to Montgomery County in 1840, where the elder Jones lived until passing in 1853 and 1855. Robert had attended school long enough to learn to read and write, and in 1836 he married a former slave named Dilly Henderson in Ohio, returning to Crawfordsville in 1839. Dilly died in 1842, leaving four children. Robert then married Susan McKee, with whom he had eight children.

A farmer who was able to own his own land, Robert was a member, as were both of his wives, of the first A.M.E. Church [known as Bethel] in Montgomery County, contributing the first timber from his land toward the building of the church and remaining as one of its trustees for 27 years.¹⁴



Henry Beebee Carrington was born in 1824 in New England. His grandfather was the partner of Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin, and superintendent for the armories at Springfield and Harper's Ferry. The young Carrington, whose first teachers were the early abolitionists Rev. William Goodman and Dr. E.D. Hudson, entered Yale and during a lecture was introduced to a speaker who horrified him with stories of African slave trade. He was one of two students who stood to give a pledge to work for universal liberty to the speaker — one John Ossawatomi Brown.

Carrington's faithfulness to this pledge is shown by his actions in relation to an association to the Rev. Noah Porter Sr. of the Congregational Church in Farmington,

Connecticut. When Rev. Porter's windows were broken because he offered prayers on behalf of the *Amistad* slaves being held nearby, Carrington's strong feelings against slavery returned. Upon graduation from Yale in 1845, he became a professor at Irving Institute in Tarrytown, New York, and many years later came to Wabash College in Crawfordsville.

In 1849 during a time in Ohio, he acted as a bodyguard to Frederick Douglass when a mob attempted to drown out his addresses at the old statehouse in Columbus.¹⁵ In 1861 he also presented the first colors to colored troops of the 58th Massachusetts regiment. During the war he amassed a brilliant military record, including the charge of 139,000 men in Indiana.¹⁶

Samuel Clark came to Montgomery County in 1847. Born in South Carolina, he was a Quaker with strong abolitionist ties. A miller by trade, he ran the Clark Mill in connection to his farm, and was known to stand up for the principles he thought to be right, including freedom for slaves. He turned his farm into an Underground Railroad station to help those in flight. His wife Mary, a native of North Carolina, was also a Quaker and with both having lived in slave states and knowing the horrors of slavery, they felt that exercising the Christian tenets of the Friends beliefs on this subject possessed that sense of right.¹⁷

Zachariah Williams was born to slaves in Lebanon, Kentucky, in 1841. In 1855 the young Zachariah had the desire to be on his own and escaped north to Springfield, Illinois, finding work in a hotel. With the outbreak of the Civil War, his parents had been given their freedom, but they both died before they could enjoy it.

Zachariah enlisted in 1862 and fought in several major battles. At the end of his service, he moved north again, settling in Crawfordsville. He had traveled extensively and amassed a fortune, becoming a property owner in other towns such Rockville and Indianapolis. Williams was a steward and trustee of the A.M.E. Church, a Mason and member of the Odd Fellows. His home was known to be stopping place for notables of his race, among whom he was known as a man of great influence.¹⁸

Photo of Wabash College from Postcard, circa 1910. Indiana State Library Collection

Photo of John and Margaret Speed taken from *Crawfordsville Journal and Review*, October 21, 1931

Photo of Speed Cabin (relocated to Lane Place) taken by Berky Davis

Photo of Bethel A.M.E. Church, Crawfordsville, taken by Berky Davis

¹ H.W. Beckwith, *History of Montgomery County Together with Historic Notes on the Wabash Valley*. (comments by P.S. Kennedy) H.H. Hill & N. Iddings, Chicago, 1881, 105

² *Ibid.* 130

³ *Ibid.* 131

⁴ www.wabash.edu/about/wabash/history

⁵ Crenshaw, *Bury Me in a Free Land*, 46

⁶ Beckwith, *History of Montgomery County*, 285

⁷ *Ibid.* 212

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *History of Montgomery County, Indiana*. A.W. Bowen & Co., Indianapolis, 1913.

¹¹ Charles Cadwallader. "Decaying Shack is Relic of Underground Railway," *Crawfordsville Journal and Review*, October 21, 1931.

¹² www.crawfordsville.org/lane

¹³ Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: Edward Allen Hannegan, Part V – Conclusion," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, October 15, 2000.

¹⁴ Beckwith, *History of Montgomery County*, 222

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 247

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 249

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 257-8

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 288

OWEN COUNTY

The state legislature created Owen County in January 1819. The name was chosen to honor a Kentuckian, Col. Abraham Owen, killed in the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. The original boundaries of the county took in twice the area it does now, until Monroe and Clay counties were created from it in 1825.

Most of the early settlers came from southern Indiana, Kentucky or North Carolina. The southern influence was strong, as shown by the townships being named for southern statesmen or soldiers. Many of these families were of very modest means and followed the same religious paths. Because they were few in number, and had been together for some time, they often were intertwined by marriage.¹

Only three townships had been created in the early 1820s, but by 1861 these boundaries had been changed or modified a total of 24 times. Spencer was platted and set as county seat in 1820, with a log cabin as the courthouse.²

Early life in Owen County was not easy. The roads were primitive and of the rivers and creeks that crossed the territory, only the White River was navigable. Settlements were isolated, making it easy for organized bands of thieves and robbers to prey upon them. But settlers were determined, after all they had come for the cheap government land that was offered at a price of \$2.00 per acre.³

Several coalmines were opened and speculators, many of whom were from the southern states, often crossed the territory attempting to buy up coal. Hunters also roamed the area in search of game, as it was known that in Owen County wild animals were abundant because the dense thickets provided them refuge.

Baptist seemed to be the religious affiliation of choice for most of the settlers, with Presbyterians and Methodist Episcopalians also dating back to 1826. There is record of an A.M.E. church formed with only five or six members. The trustees were John Wilson, Pleasant Evans and Benjamin Bass and membership is said later to have reached 25 in number. Martin Scott, who had served in the 28th U.S.C.T. was also said to be a trustee.⁴

Like Scott, the men of Owen County came forward to fight when the Civil War broke out. Camp Hughes, named for former Indiana Congressman James Hughes, was set up as a training camp in Gosport. The 59th Indiana Volunteer Infantry trained there from 1861-1862.⁵

Marion Township was the last to be formed in 1830 and by 1836 nine families, including two Free Black, had settled in. They had also purchased the government land at the \$2.00 an acre price and attempted to farm it. Chapman* Harris was said to be of enormous physique, often boasting that he carried Native American, African and Anglo-Saxon blood in his veins. Benjamin Bass had come from a southern Indiana settlement.⁶

For more than twenty years these two men set the way for a considerable population of Free Blacks who owned most of two sections of Marion Township east of Spencer. While they encountered great difficulties, they did accomplish establishing a settlement, but, by the mid-1850s, these families had sold out and left the territory. Records note that Farrow Powell and Benjamin Bass moved north to St. Joseph County, Clayborn* and Hardin Harris went further north to Cass County, Michigan, and the Russells and Chandlers moved west to Vigo County.⁷

* Some historical texts reviewed list only the name Chapman, while others have noted Clayborn, Harris, as being an African-American living in Owen County. Records verifying the distinction between these two identities have not yet been found by this author to determine if these are the same person or from the same family, thus the two different notations in this text.

¹ Owen County Historical and Geneological Society, "General History of Owen County, Indiana,"

www.owen.in.us/owenhist

² Owen County Historical and Geneological Society, "Townships and Towns," www.owen.in.us/owenhist

³ "General History of Owen County"

⁴ Charles Blanchard, Ed. *History of Owen County - 1884* (Owen County Historical Society, 1977) 680

⁵ "Townships and Towns"

⁶ "General History of Owen County"

⁷ *Ibid.*

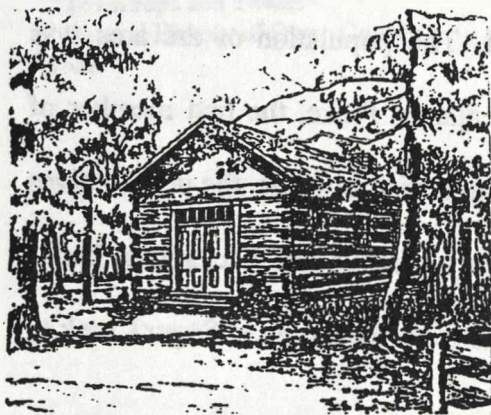
PARKE COUNTY

Settlers came years before the territory bordered by the Wabash River was organized as Parke County by the state legislature in January, 1821. The population of the area was estimated to be 200 at the time. Named in honor of Benjamin Parke, the first member of Congress for the territory who was afterwards territorial and district judge, the deer, wolves and bears roamed freely where Native Americans, mainly Miamis and Kickapoos, had a large reservation area set up running the length of the river from the mouth of Sugar Creek to the mouth of Big Raccoon Creek.¹

The greatest influence on life in Parke County was the church; the second greatest influence was school. Catholic missionaries had worked with the Native Americans long before any Protestants arrived in the territory. In 1832 Lorenzo Dow came to Rockville. People came from far and near, including frontiersmen dressed in buckskins and beaded moccasins leaning against long rifles or trees and women dressed in calico sitting on the stumps – all poised to hear the renowned preacher.²

The Society of Friends (more commonly known as Quakers) settled in the territory around 1825. While most of the Quakers in Parke County were from Guilford County, North Carolina, some came from Virginia and both groups were influential in various aspects of the county's development. For example, when a township with the greatest concentration of Quakers was to be named Scott, in honor of General Winfield Scott who had captured the territory by warfare, a large number of them protested and persuaded the authorities to name the area in honor of one of their founding fathers, William Penn.³

The first meeting of the Society of Friends in Parke County was held at the home of Adam Siler in 1825. They continued to meet in the homes of families until a meeting house was built in 1827. Then, under the jurisdiction of the Honey Creek Monthly Meeting in Vigo

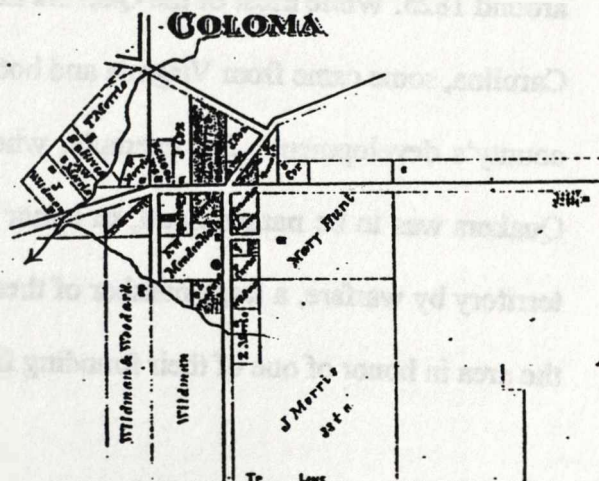


County, the Bloomfield (later to be renamed Bloomingdale) Monthly Meeting was established. In 1830 the Rocky Run Society of Friends was established at Coloma in Reserve Township, with Poplar Grove Society of Friends in Washington Township and Rush Creek Society of Friends in Liberty Township forming

in 1832. By 1855 the average attendance at Bloomingdale was 100 and after the war, membership was estimated to be between 300 to 400 members.⁴

To the Quakers, the institution of slavery was unjust and degrading to the moral and social life of slaveholders. It is not surprising then, to learn that much of the Underground Railroad activity in Parke County centered around their involvement. Many of the families that had come from North Carolina had first-hand knowledge of the ills and injustices dealt to slaves and, in many cases, were ready to aid in their flight to freedom.

Morris was one of the oldest and most respected family names in Parke County. They arrived from North Carolina (1826) and Virginia (1828) and settled close to Coloma and Leatherwood Creek in Reserve Township. Most of the men were farmers



and known to be high-minded life members of the Society of Friends.⁵

Thomas Morris is said to have hidden fugitive slaves in a false kitchen cabinet leading to a shed roof outside.⁶ The fugitives would then travel from this station, commonly known as "the White House,"⁷ to a cabin one-quarter of a mile south in Section 22 of Reserve Township.

From his home on Leatherwood Creek, William Morris, who came to the area in 1828 from Virginia, also aided the flight of slaves coming northward. While little was found to document his aid, Morris is listed as having been indicted, with four other Quakers, by the State of Indiana, in April 1847, charged with "harboring a Negro." The charges were later summarily dismissed by the court and Morris was set free.⁸

Hiding at safe houses such as Morris' or elsewhere in the area was not easy. At the first sight of unfriendly intruders, the fugitives would scurry off to cabins hidden in the woods along the properties of other Quakers such as Jethro Coffin and Alfred Hadley. There were several such cabins, including one on Hadley's property that was run by Lewis Artis, said to be a runaway slave himself.⁹

In April, 1848, Zacariah, Thomas and William Morris, along with their wives and the Lewis' family, recorded the transfer of two and one-half acres of land in the northern corner of Section 22 in Reserve Township (near Leatherwood Creek) to Lewis Artis and Matthew Artis.¹⁰ In July of that same year Lewis, his wife Henrietta and Matthew, along with Jesse Lane, Richard Hall and John Artis deeded that same "....parcel of land for religious and school purposes for the colored population living on Leatherwood Creek and for no other purposes and if at any time said land should be used for some other purposes or should said

trustees or their successors after being instructed by said colored society be paid over to those that have contributed...."¹¹ [Note: Rev. Lewis Artis is also recorded as the organizer of the Second Baptist Church in Rockville in July, 1870, starting with 11 members.¹² Artis is also linked to the Lost Creek settlement of Vigo County.]

The Siler families arrived in Parke County in 1824 and 1825 and also settled in the area near Leatherwood Creek. Adam and James Siler built one of the area's mills in 1831. In 1846 James, along with fellow Quakers Solomen Allen, Exam Morris, William Pickard and Alfred Hadley established the Bloomingdale Academy for the purpose of furnishing an academic education for both sexes. The students who attended labored on the school's farm in order to pay for their education.¹³

In 1847 James was indicted with four other Quakers on the charge of "harboring a Negro." Unlike three of the four who had charges dropped, or the one who was tried and fined, Siler was brought to trial and found to be not guilty and set free.¹⁴

Siler supposedly continued his activities in aiding the flight of fugitive slaves with the aid of his wife Hannah and several other family members. They remained in the Bloomingdale area and upon their deaths were buried in the Bloomingdale Cemetery, along with several other members of the family.

The four Davis brothers arrived in Maryland from Wales in the 1750s. Eli Davis married his cousin, a daughter of brother Robert, and they became the parents of eight children, including John Givan, born in Fleming County, Kentucky, in 1810. Eli, a Baptist minister and farmer amasses quite a large number of slaves during their time in Kentucky. The slaves

were given their freedom when the family moved north to Indiana in 1819, establishing a new home in Greene Township of Parke County. Each of the Davis children was given a quarter section of the land.¹⁵



John grew up in Parke County, expanding on the early education he received in log school houses. At the age of 21, he was elected Sheriff and in 1833 became County Clerk. He continued in that position for 17 years, continuously being re-elected and earning a reputation for impeccable record-keeping and a willingness to aid anyone coming before his office. Even the Quakers, noting "we don't like thy politics, but we believe thee is honest"¹⁶ voted for him to a man.

Davis was vehemently opposed to slavery, so much so that he refused to side with his fellow Democratic administration and running in 1856 as an independent candidate for re-election to a Congressional seat he first won in 1850. Later, after serving four terms, Davis decided not to run again, especially after the pro-slavery faction of the Democratic party, who had tried to offer him money or political offices for his friends if he would fall in line with their way of thinking, used its political weight against him when he refused their offers.¹⁷

In 1862 the family (he had married the daughter of early Parke County settlers) moved to Terre Haute, where John G. Davis died in 1866. While it is doubtful that Davis had any direct participation with the Underground Railroad movement that was so prevalent in Parke County, his political positions and views on the issues surely had some effect on the events that took place.

In 1826 Charles Britton brought a young Free Black woman named Sukey to Parke County to work for Thomas Blackburn at his inn in Rockville. Sukey was intelligent, yet superstitious, but as she reportedly refused to associate with many of the other African-Americans as they came into the community, it was doubtful she assisted in an UGRR activities.

She claimed to have seen General George Washington and his army as a young child, giving her some celebrity in the growing village. Sukey was a devout member of the Presbyterian church, whose members cared for her in her aging years, along with the funds she received as decreed by the county commissioners.¹⁸ Sukey Gray died on July 28, 1865 at the age of 110 as a well-remembered and well-respected woman of Rockville.¹⁹

Patrick Thomas was born in Vincennes in 1840, the son of Free Blacks who moved to Lawrence County, Illinois, shortly thereafter. Patrick worked for his father until 1864, when he went to school in Chicago. In late 1865, Patrick moved to Parke County, selecting to settle in Rockville.²⁰

While his residence in west central Indiana was not during the era of Underground Railroad activity, his time in Rockville is significant for several reasons:

- Having heard Frederick Douglass speak in Chicago in 1865, Thomas began a correspondence with him, eventually securing him to lecture in Rockville.
- In 1872 he encouraged a colony of his people in North Carolina to emigrate to Rockville to make a life better than that of the post-war South.

- He actively promoted the interests of a "colored" public school, which was eventually opened in Rockville. [*Note: the building that housed this school now houses the Parke County Historical Society.*]
- In 1872 he founded an A.M.E. Church in Rockville and their first Sunday School, serving as its superintendent for two years.²¹

In 1866 Patrick Thomas married Angeline Bass, daughter of Nelson Bass of Vigo County. They had three children. Patrick and his family, along with many members of the African-American community in Parke County (which numbered around 200 in the 1870 Census), were considered to be God-fearing people worthy of respect.

Often, when fugitive slaves made the trek to Indiana and Parke County, they arrived in pathetic condition with only the clothes on their backs. They were given food and supplied with new garments by the residents of the area, and if they were sick or ailing Dr. Horace Cannon would treat them. North Carolina Quakers who immigrated to Annapolis in the early 1840s, Horace and Gulielma Cannon devoted time, money and often their personal safety to the cause of aiding the fugitives in their flight to freedom.²²



Shortly after their arrival in Annapolis, a fellow Quaker named Woodard inherited a large sum of money and 40 slaves in Alabama. Too old and infirm to make the journey to take possession, Dr. Cannon offered to go in his stead. He would return with the slaves, who would then be given their freedom.²³

When the steamboat arrived at the Wabash River port of Montezuma, an angry group was awaiting, attempting to prevent him and the party of slaves to disembark. But before any trouble could start, Dr. Cannon brandished a gun borrowed from the captain, stepped forward with his wards behind him. Knowing that Quakers abhorred violence, the sight of Dr. Cannon with a weapon swayed the crowd to silence and he and his group were allowed to pass.²⁴

To prevent African-Americans from becoming wards of the state, a law was enacted which prevented any person in Indiana from employing a person of color without posting a bond. Dr. Cannon refused to post such bonds on the group he brought from Alabama, and went to the extent of employing one of the now freed men to clear a field on his farm in Annapolis, working alongside his own sons.²⁵

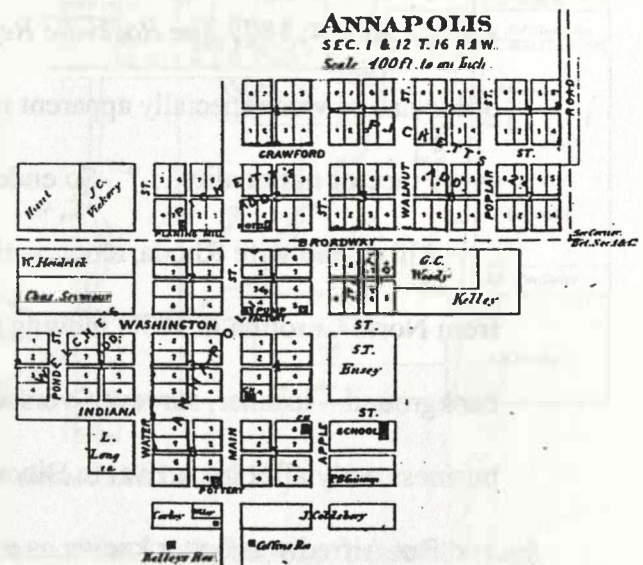
Dr. Cannon was indicted with four other Quakers, tried and found guilty. His fine was assessed at \$10.00.²⁶ He appealed the decision, but was overruled, also being assessed additional court fees of \$16.27 to cover the cost of the prosecution.²⁷ The Cannons were often overheard to say that the possessions they owned, "at marriage, consisted of a dinner pot and a gourd."²⁸ When sympathetic Friends tried to pay his fines on his behalf, he refused and instead held a sale of his property, including horses and cattle to settle the fines.²⁹

In August of 1851 Dr. Cannon was on his way to pay a medical visit across Sugar Creek. Despite warnings from family and others in the area, he was not going to let the fact that heavy rains had put the stream over its banks keep him from his medical duty. When he failed to appear, the search for him began, but nothing was ever found of Dr. Horace Cannon except his hat, a weary, bedraggled horse, and several months later, some bones found when the waters receded.³⁰

Guliema Cannon went on with her life in Parke County, living with sons William and Joseph and in April, 1864, she died across the state line at Tuscola, Illinois. Son Joseph went on to serve in elected offices, once obtaining the seat of Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. "Uncle Joe," as he was affectionately known in his district, claimed that he never forgot the details of his father's trial and that the purposes and ideals behind his work with the Underground Railroad was never forgotten.³¹



The name Coffin is synonymous with the mention of Underground Railroad activities in Indiana, usually in reference to Levi and the work he did in the eastern part of the state. But, ties to him and the UGRR run strong in other parts of the state, especially in Parke and Vigo Counties.



Robert Addison Coffin, son of Vestal, a cousin of Levi's, came to Parke County in 1843, locating near a good friend from North Carolina, Dr. Horace Cannon. Several other Coffin relatives also moved into the area:

- Jethro Coffin's Annapolis house, on property bordering that of Alfred Hadley, reportedly had a secret stairway in a kitchen cabinet;³²
- William G. Coffin erected a foundry near Coke Oven Hollow, and was later involved in a flat-boat yard that constructed vessels to travel on the Wabash River;³³
- Thomas (half-brother to Jethro) was connected to the foundry;³⁴

- Albert G. Coffin was indicted with four other Quakers on the charge of "harboring a Negro." (Charges were later dropped against him and two others.)³⁵

Robert Addison went to work for Alfred Hadley in 1844, later marrying his daughter Emily and fathering a daughter and son. Upon Emily's early death, R.A. kept his connection to the Hadley's by marrying Emily's cousin Ruth in Hendricks County. In his 1897 memoirs he detailed many of the conditions both the station operators and slaves faced in passing through Parke County.³⁶

On June 4, 1873 *The Rockville Republican* ended a tribute saying "...the unselfishness of his nature was especially apparent in his life long efforts for the relief of the oppressed of every race or nationality...."³⁷ So ended a memorial to Alfred Hadley.

Alfred and wife Rhoda, along with three children, come to Morgan County, Indiana, from North Carolina in 1830, moving to Parke County a few years later. Hadley had a varied background – teacher, surveyor, versed in the study of law and medicine. His foresight in business early after his arrival in Bloomingdale gained wide recognition in the area.

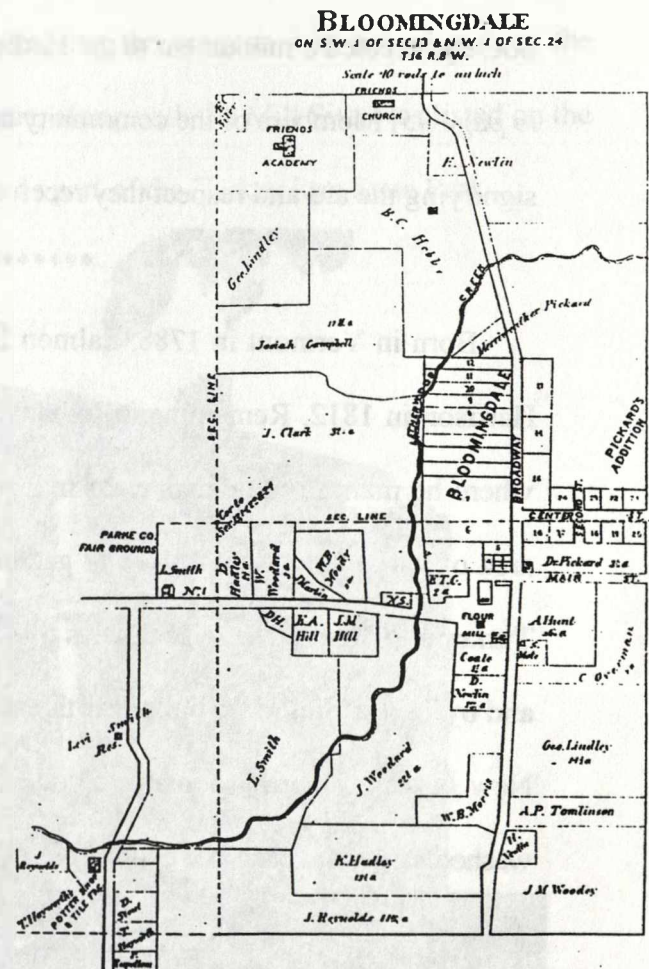
But Alfred was better known as a cool, calculating reformer who pursued his goals with a determination matched only by that of wife Rhoda.³⁸ And that reputation came from knowing any iota of the Underground Railroad activities he was involved in.

Alfred had an old-fashioned carriage that was used to aid fugitives on their way.³⁹ The carriage was probably custom built by William Stanley, one of the biggest businessmen in Annapolis.⁴⁰

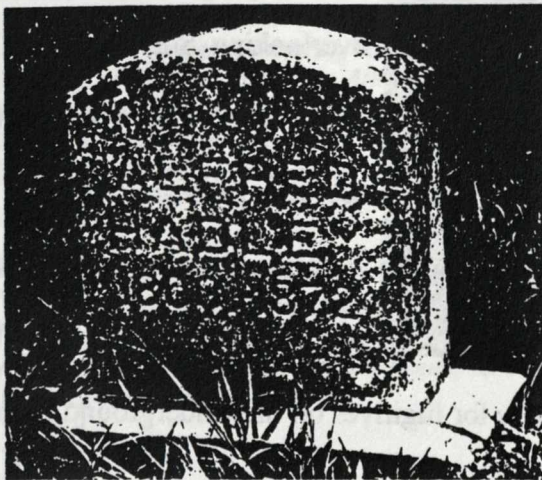
Rhoda was just as involved in UGRR activities as Alfred. She not only provided food and clothing needed by those passing through, but used many other tactics to keep bounty

hunters at bay. She once prepared a chicken dinner for slave hunters, delaying them and giving Alfred time to get to Crawfordsville with his 'cargo.'⁴¹ Not all of Hadley's neighbors were as helpful and it was necessary to keep an wary eye open, not only for the law, but also for some of the neighbors.⁴²

Hiding places in the three-story Hadley home reportedly were two staircases, one from the kitchen and one extending from the hall. Slaves also hid in a sub-cellar with a trap door covered over with straw. Another hiding place was the hay mow beneath the hay. [The house, located on the east side of what is now U.S. 41, burnt to the ground in 1932 and a log cabin used as a slave hideaway was demolished in 1966.]⁴³



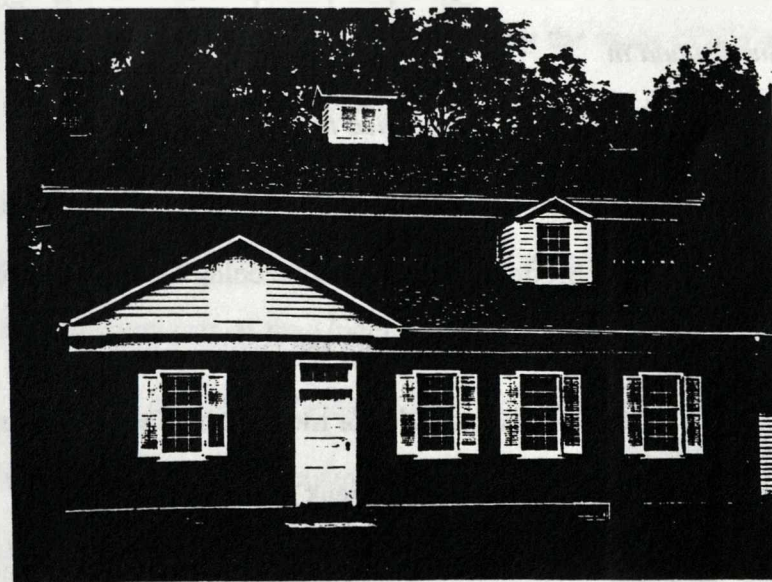
It was estimated that slaves from every slave state of the South, but one, passed through Bloomingdale, with five being the most at one time going through the Hadley's hands. The station operated for more than 25 years, ending just after the outbreak of the war.⁴⁴



With the passing of Alfred in 1872 and Rhoda in 1892, an era of strong character and

spirit of philanthropy passed. In 1932 the Parke County and Penn Township Historical Societys erected a monument to the Hadleys near the spot where their house had stood. [*refer to page 45*] Members of the community collected stones from farms around the area – signifying the aid and respect they received from the majority of their neighbors.

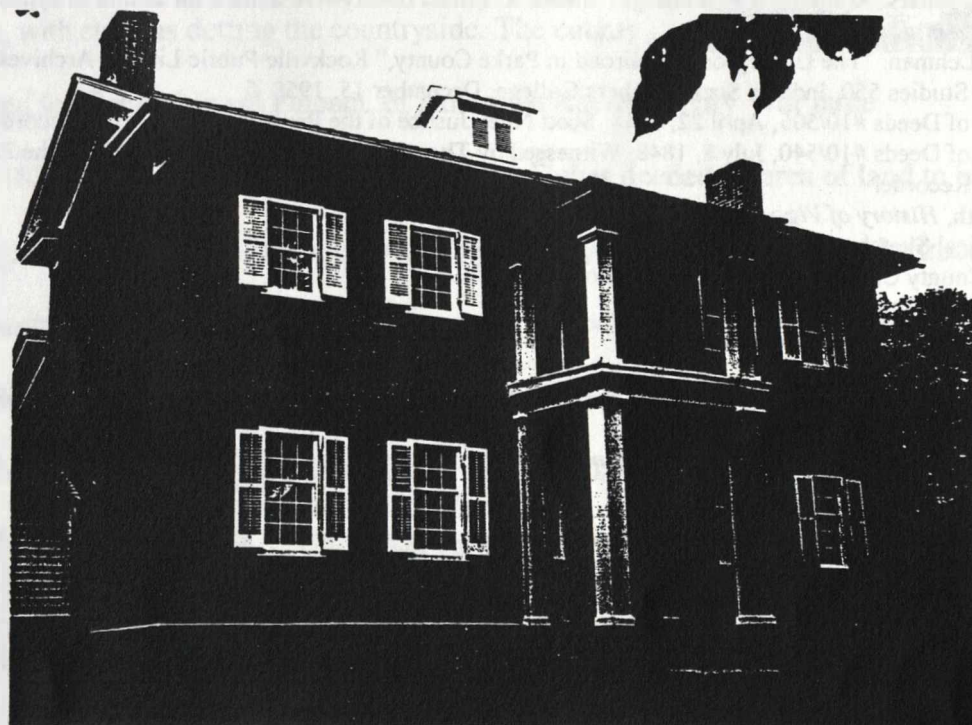
Born in Vermont in 1788, Salmon Lusk had been a soldier under Gen. William Henry Harrison in 1812. Remaining in Indiana after the war, he first settled in Vermillion County where he married the daughter of mill owner John Beard. Lusk arrived in the Sugar Creek area of Parke County in 1826 and gathered up land for several miles around an area called Turkey Run due to the wild turkeys that roved the gorge. He built a mill and covered bridge and by 1830 stores were built near the mill. Lusk built flat boats to ship products to and from New Orleans. During a major flood in 1847, the mill and surrounding businesses were washed away, never to be rebuilt.⁴⁵



In 1841, along with his sons, Lusk constructed a Federal-style home on a bluff overlooking Sugar Creek.⁴⁶ The house was rumored to have had a secret passage behind the fireplace leading upstairs where fugitive slaves would hide. This

was supposedly the last stop in Parke County for fugitives on the Underground Railroad.

When Salmon died, his son John remained in the house until his death in 1915, living as a recluse all of his adult life. John's estate concerning the property was turned over to the state and a state park was formed. The Lusk Home, along with the Mill Site, was listed on the National Register and made a State Historic Site as part of the Turkey Run State Park.



Sketch of log cabin used for the Rocky Run Society of Friends at Coloma from 1834-1864 from *Historical Sketches of Montezuma, Indiana*, compiled and edited by Richard M. Wheeler, 1997.

Plat map of Coloma from *Atlas Map of Parke County, Indiana*, 1874

Photo of John Givan Davis taken from *Historical Sketch of Parke County*

Photo of Dr. Horace Cannon and Guilema Canon taken from *Historical Sketch of Parke County*

Plat map of Annapolis, denoting "Coffin Residence," from *Atlas Map of Parke County, Indiana*, 1874

Plat map of Bloomingdale from *Atlas Map of Parke County, Indiana*, 1874

Photo of tombstone of Alfred Hadley, Bloomingdale Cemetery, Parke County, taken by Berky Davis

Photo of Lusk Home (rear view), Turkey Run State Park, taken by Berky Davis

Photo of Lusk Home (front view), Turkey Run State Park, taken by Berky Davis

¹ A.T. Andreas. *Atlas Map of Parke County, Indiana* (by the author, Chicago, 1874) frontispiece

² "Historical Sketch of Parke County," *Combined 1874 Atlas, 1908 Atlas, 11916 Issac Strauss Centennial Memorial and Name Index of Parke County*. (Parke County Historical Society, Rockville, Indiana, Windmill Publications, 1994) 11

³ *Ibid.* 8

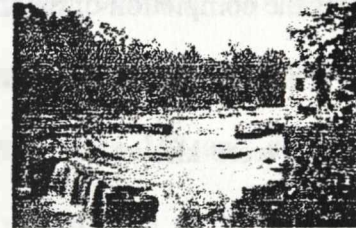
⁴ *Ibid.* 14-15

⁵ H.W. Beckwith. *History of Vigo and Parke County Together with Historic Notes on the Wabash Valley* (H.H. Hill and N. Iddings, Chicago, 1880) 180

- ⁶ Cindi Marietta. "Bloomingdale Area Once Underground Railroad Site," *The Daily Clintonian*, September 21, 1989.
- ⁷ "Historical Locations Designated in Special Projects." *Parke Place*, October, 1983. 21
- ⁸ Parke County Circuit Court, Civil Order Book, Vol. IV, August 1845-October 1849. 244-246 [The State of Indiana indicted Albert G. Coffin, William Morris, James K. Steele, James Siler, and Horace F. Cannon on the charge of 'harboring a Negro' in April of 1847. The state later dropped the charge against Coffin, Morris, and Steele. Siler was tried for the offence and found not guilty. Cannon was found guilty by the court and assessed a fine of ten dollars. Although free of charges, Steele was fined twenty-five dollars for failure to appear to answer the indictment. *Ibid* 288]
- ⁹ Paul G. Lehman. "The Underground Railroad in Parke County," Rockville Public Library Archives, a paper for Social Studies 550, Indiana State Teachers College, December 15, 1958. 5
- ¹⁰ Record of Deeds #10/505, April 22, 1848. Scott Noel, Justice of the Peace, John G. Davis, Recorder.
- ¹¹ Record of Deeds #10/540, July 8, 1848. Witnessed by Thomas Morris. Scott Noel, Justice of the Peace, John G. Davis, Recorder
- ¹² Beckwith, *History of Vigo and Parke County*, 98
- ¹³ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 16
- ¹⁴ Parke County Circuit Court, Civil Order Book, Vol. IV
- ¹⁵ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 51
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸ Report of the Commissioners of Parke County to the Auditor of the State of Indiana. Comm. #5/484, December session, 1863.
- ¹⁹ Beckwith, *History of Vigo and Parke County*, 100
- ²⁰ *Ibid*. 155
- ²¹ *Ibid*. 156
- ²² "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 61
- ²³ Enoch P. Shrigley, "Forum - The Reader's Corner," *Indianapolis Star Magazine*, May 16, 1976.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*.
- ²⁵ Lehman, "The Underground Railroad in Parke County," 9
- ²⁶ Parke County Circuit Court, Civil Order Book, 244-246.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*. 355
- ²⁸ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 61
- ²⁹ Lehman, "The Underground Railroad in Parke County," 10
- ³⁰ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 61
- ³¹ *Ibid*.
- ³² Lehman, "The Underground Railroad in Parke County," 5
- ³³ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 96
- ³⁴ *Ibid*
- ³⁵ Parke County Circuit Court, Civil Order Book, 244-246.
- ³⁶ Lehman, "The Underground Railroad in Parke County," 5
- ³⁷ Marietta, "Bloomingdale Area Once Underground Railroad Site"
- ³⁸ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 120
- ³⁹ Mrs. Harlan B. Newlin, "Underground Railroad - How Runaway Slaves Were Helped on Their Way to Canada," *The Rockville Republican*, October 17, 1917. [Mrs. Newlin was the daughter of Alfred Hadley. This article was prepared by her and read before the Historic Society on Saturday, October 13, 1917, by her daughter Mrs. James E. Elder of Marshall, Indiana.]
- ⁴⁰ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 33
- ⁴¹ Lehman, "The Underground Railroad in Parke County," 7
- ⁴² Max Harvey. "Memorial Marks Site of Former UGRR Station," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, October 8, 1950.
- ⁴³ Louise Mills. "Site Marks Underground Railroad," *The Commercial News*, Danville, Illinois, November 25, 1971. [The anecdotes related here are attributed to Clifford Hadley of Danville and his brother Clair of Hillery, Illinois. Both are great-grandsons of Alfred Hadley and recall stories handed down to them through the years.]
- ⁴⁴ Newlin, "Underground Railroad - How Runaway Slaves Were Helped on Their Way to Canada,"
- ⁴⁵ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 96
- ⁴⁶ National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination form. Lusk Home and Mill Site, 1972.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Putnam County was created in 1822. An area of gently rolling hills and plains characterizes most of the area's terrain, with streams dotting the countryside. The county is named for General Isreal Putnam, of American Revolutionary War fame.



In 1823 one of the earliest settlers, Ephraim Dukes deeded an area of land to be used for a county seat and in 1825, his son-in-law, John Wesley Clark added land to the tract, giving the community of Greencastle its start, supposedly receiving its name from Dukes' hometown in Greencastle, Pennsylvania.¹



While it grew steadily, the founding of Indiana Asbury College, now known as DePauw University in 1837 gave the town its greatest boost. Taking its name came from the first American bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Francis Asbury, the college's aim was to strive for national prominence on "the most liberal principles, accessible to all religious denominations, and designed for the benefit of our citizens in general."² The site for the school was selected because the residents of the area raised the necessary \$25,000 to convince the Methodists that Greencastle, though rough and frontier-like, was a viable place to establish themselves. In 1837 the charter was granted and the first cornerstone laid.

Matthew Simpson was inaugurated as the first president. This friend and counselor to Abraham Lincoln was surely inspired by his ideals and it is possible that these views were indoctrinated into the ecumenically-designed curriculum, especially with only one professor and five students in that first year. The enrollment increased steadily, but during the Civil

War years, many of the young men went to fight for either the North or South. It wasn't until after the completion of the Civil War that the college admitted women as students.³

The Methodists, while somewhat divided on the issue of slavery on the national and state levels, were known to call for equal education. Indiana Asbury College was said to be an example of an anti-slavery institution, as was its brother institution, Wabash College in Crawfordsville.⁴ Influential speakers of the times, such as Henry Ward Beecher, made their way to the school, expounding on the evils of slavery.

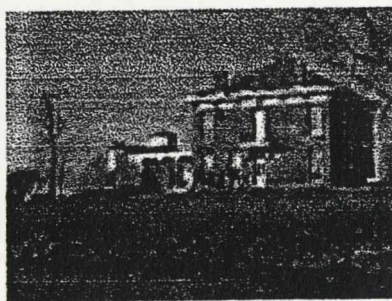
Some Methodists were in great support of the Colonization Movement and several known ministers of the day served on the Indiana Colonization Board. James Mitchell was one such minister who was also an agent of the American Colonization Society.⁵ It was rumored that in 1854 a family from Putnam County was counted among the party of 14 who chose to be sent to Liberia.

Very little record was found to document any Underground Railroad activity in the area, however legend has it that a network of underground caverns known as Sellar's Cave rests beneath the area where the university stands.⁶ These caves were supposedly discovered in the 1800's and served as a hiding place and link for fugitive slaves traveling the state's central route. No documentation has been found to substantiate the rumors, but some tales did tell of an off-road route of the UGRR that stretched directly from Greencastle to Bloomingdale in Parke County.

Levi Coffin notes in his autobiography of a time when he was stranded by a storm on the National Road near Greencastle while on his way to Terre Haute. He had completed the purchase of 80 acres in neighboring Morgan County for the purpose of establishing a Quaker settlement there. It is likely that he may have made his way through Cloverdale, a small

country village, sprouting up on a trail south of the National Road. It was nothing more than a mercantile store and post office in 1836, but a growing number of settlers flowed into the area, especially with the development of the Louisville, New Albany, and Chicago Railroad (later the Monon), so that by 1854 the population had swelled to 148 and doubled that amount within the next ten years.⁷

On the National Road, not far from Greencastle, sits a home built by Major Melville



McHaffie, a mule supplier to the Union Army. Although rebuilt in 1870, the original site is rumored to have been a station along the Underground Railroad, along with the marshy area and farmlands that surround it. After the war, the estate became a breeding farm for racehorses and later was converted into a feed mill. Left to ruin for many years, it has since been

reclaimed by its owners and now Rising Hall is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The names of Parker S. Browder and "Singing" Joe Hillis came up in research of being Underground Railroad Operators from Putnam County.⁸ But while the family names do appear in searches of census records, details and other biographies, were not found to substantiate that these two men resided in the area.

Further north of the National Road in Hendricks County, Addison Coffin and Nathan Hadley established the small town of Hadley, then known as Mimosa.⁹ Fugitive slaves that passed through Hendricks County were said to have come by way of Bloomington and Mooresville through Plainfield, then heading north.¹⁰ But with the known connections of Coffin and Hadley in the surrounding Parke and Montgomery counties, their own relocation

to this area, plus the establishment of the Friends Annual Meeting House in nearby Plainfield, it is a logical assumption that some Underground Railroad activity took place in routing fugitive slaves through Putnam County.

Photo of Upper Cataract Falls, circa 1928 by Clyde Volkers, Indiana State Library Collection at www.state.lib.in.us

Photo of DePauw from www.epauw.edu

Photo of Rising Hill from www.hgtv.com/library

¹ "Greencastle, Indiana," www.greencastle.in.us

² "The History of Depauw University," www.depauw.edu/visitors/traditions

³ Ibid.

⁴ Crenshaw, *Bury Me in a Free Land*, 46

⁵ Ibid. 18

⁶ "Restore America." The Home and Garden TV Network. www.hgtv.com

⁷ "Cloverdale History," www.cloverdale.in.us

⁸ "Directory of Names of Underground Railroad Operators," www.ugrr.org/names/map-in

⁹ "I Told You So," *Danville Republican*, March 30, 1933.

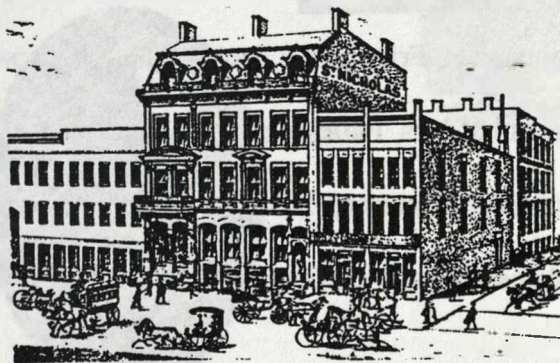
¹⁰ Roscoe Leak. "The Underground Railroad in Hendricks County" *The Indiana Magazine of History*. No date listed. Tippecanoe Public Library archives

TIPPECANOE COUNTY

The area later known as Tippecanoe County held a strategic military importance which dated back to 1717. Fort Quiatenon was one of the first in a chain built by the French and was the home for 3,000 residents until the French and Indian War in 1756. It then was under the control of the British and later Native Americans until it was ordered destroyed by President George Washington in 1791.

In 1811 General William Henry Harrison led a group of soldiers up the Wabash River from Vincennes to put an end to a growing number of Indian raids being led by Chief Tecumseh and his brother The Prophet in a quest to band the various Native American tribes into one nation. At the Battle of Tippecanoe, Prophet's Town was burnt to the ground and the tribes broken in fragments who would not then be hostile to the new group of settlers coming into the area in the early 1820s.

Tippecanoe County has a variety of soil and scenery that were drawing people to the area. Prairies bordered the north and west, rich river bottoms in the south and east and bluffs along the Wabash River in the south. While the rich resources drew settlers into the area before and after the county was organized in 1826, they did not make the area geographically beneficial to the Underground Railroad movement.¹ But the area surrounding the growing riverfront town of Lafayette did play a minor role in ferrying fugitive slaves to freedom.



Lafayette, named after the Marquis of Revolutionary War fame, was platted in 1825 and made the county seat for the county. The Wabash River afforded the main transportation into the area, with the city wharf just a block

from Courthouse Square. In the 1840s the Wabash & Erie Canal came in and by the 1850s the railroads made what had basically been a supply center for new settlers, a manufacturing, merchandising and transportation center. At the same time, however, the community was gaining a reputation as a rough-and-tough town not showing major support for an abolitionist agenda which was fueled by fears that fleeing slaves would overrun the territory.

By the mid 1840s gangs of river toughs and ruffians (with possible connections to the Knights of the Golden Circle, "Copperheads," or "Butternuts") would band together with the intent to harass and "teach a lesson" to reported UGRR supporters. In response to these actions, a local militia was formed called the "Lafayette Blues." While some homes suspected of being UGRR stations were saved, some were burnt to the ground. The harassment did continue, however, and even several Free Blacks were forced to leave Lafayette.²



One of the homes that was threatened during these mob scares was that of the Lewis Falley family. A wholesale boot and shoe manufacturer, Falley is said to have been on a buying trip to

New Orleans when his home and store was threatened. Friends of the family armed themselves to come to the aid of Mrs. Falley and the children and were assisted when a violent thunderstorm broke, frightening the mob away before any damage could



be done.³

The routes supposedly favored by fleeing slaves ran from Crawfordsville or Attica, along the river and the Wabash & Erie Canal.

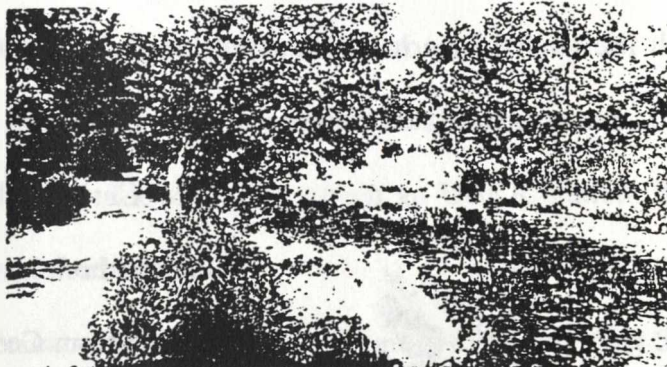
At the Quaker communities founded

in 1828 at Farmer's Institute and

neighboring areas, help would be

found to take the freedom seekers

into one of several stations in downtown Lafayette.



Usually at the center of this 'escort' service was a Black family known as the Beetles, who lived in a secluded spot near the towpath area. Ladies from the town would gather baskets to help those in need and take them to Spears, Case & Co. on the riverfront. They would then come out with money in their baskets which would in turn be passed to Mrs. Sally Beetle to help the next group of runaways that her husband would assist in moving onward.⁴

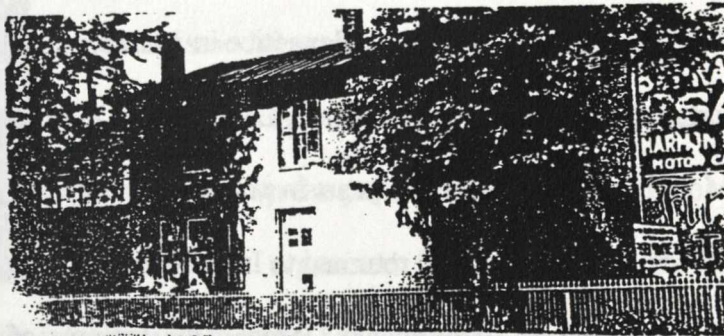
Townsfolk such as Dr. Luther Jewett, A.P. Lynn and William Foster were said to have been active in the Underground Railroad movement in Lafayette. Lynn's daughter later recalled that underneath the bay

windows of their home was a

cellar where the runaways

would be hidden during the

day, tapping on the floor or



walls to signal they needed something and being spirited away during the night to the next station.⁵ Foster, in his role as superintendent of the north end of the New Albany and Salem

(later Monon) Railroad, reportedly told his conductors to not question any Black man on their trains as it was not necessary for them to know their goings and comings. He would also be tended by a local Black, nicknamed "Jinerel Tootles," who would bring him people to escort to the trains going north.⁶



Christian Keiper was born in Pennsylvania in 1816.

Although both his maternal and paternal grandparents came to America from Germany, his mother's family were also known to be Quakers. After his teenage years, he left Pennsylvania and moved southwest, settling in Cincinnati, Ohio, for a short time before beginning work on a steamboat which ran from

Louisville to New Orleans. It wasn't long before he discovered this was not what he wanted to do for the rest of his life and after three months, he returned to Ohio to go to college. He stayed for a year and then moved to Jacksonville, Illinois, for a year and was returning to Ohio when he arrived in Evansville, Indiana, and it was suggested he enter the new school being opened in Greencastle. So in 1839 he entered DePauw, which he attended for three and a half years. He took up the study of medicine under a Dr. Cowgill and commenced practice in Alaska, Indiana, at the junction of Putnam, Owen and Morgan counties. After 13 years in practice he went to St. Louis and returned to Indiana



in 1860, settling in Lafayette.⁷ Among the features of his downtown Italianate home is a tunnel in the basement, which is rumored to have been one of the stations.⁸ While actual verification of this fact has yet to be substantiated, his wanderings as a young man and the

connections he is likely to have made, especially during his college years, make the story more plausible.*

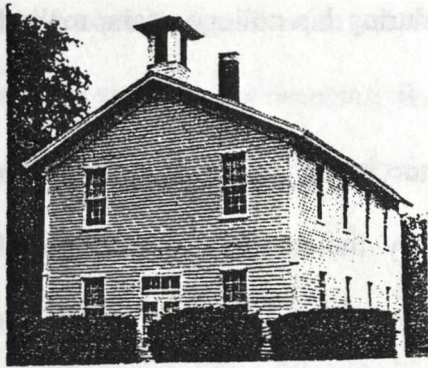
As with other communities in early Hoosier history, faith was a strong motivator for the settlers. Lafayette was no different as evidenced by the number of churches along the growing riverfront Downtown. At least one is known to have been an UGRR station: St. John's Church (a Protestant Episcopal denomination).

New York missionary Samuel Johnson came to Lafayette in the early 1830s, founding St. John's Church in 1836.⁹ He became an active station operator and conductor in the Underground Railroad. The outbuildings around the parsonage and church were used to hide runaways. Pastor Johnson would often go around and collect all the Blacks that he could find and bring them back so they would be safe, sometimes using the homes of congregation members, such as Dr. Elizur Deming and Cyrus Ball as stations.¹⁰ Ball, who came to Lafayette from Ohio in 1828 as the agent for Hartford



Protection Insurance Co., was rumored to have a small back kitchen where runaways were kept in his home. Beloved and benevolent Pastor Johnson remained the head of St. John's until 1847, when he was followed by a series of ministers, whom it can only be assumed, followed in his footsteps in helping fugitives slaves on the path to freedom.

An African Methodist Episcopal church was organized in Lafayette by Rev. Enos McIntosh in 1849. He only had six parishioners but by 1858, the small church had prospered enough to purchase a building once belonging to a German Lutheran congregation and where it is still located today.¹¹



The Society of Friends began creating settlements in Union and Wayne Townships, south of Lafayette, in 1828 at a place they called Flint Creek. In 1844, the Greenfield Monthly Meeting was established and the name later changed to Farmer's Institute. Wayne Township

was bordered by the Wabash River, which made it an active area for UGRR movement on the route from Attica.

One of the Quaker founders was Buddell Sleeper, who gave his name to the road and lived in an area jokingly called "Little Chicago," by settlers who said their community was just as growing as fast as that northern great city and would sit back to see which would go farthest.¹² While the growth didn't occur from the few houses and stores, including a blacksmith shop, what did occur was Mr. Sleeper's assistance to the runaways passing through the area. While his house still exists today, there are few visible marks of the trap door leading to the basement room that was used to hide the fugitives or of the barn and salt house on the property.¹³

Neighbors and fellow Quakers of Sleeper's were the Hawkins – Joseph, James and Levi, Jonathan Baugh and Joseph Hollingsworth. While they have not been noted in any of the resource materials used in this report, a Benjamin and John Hollingsworth are listed among the names of Underground Railroad Operators in Tippecanoe County.¹⁴ However, their relationship to Joseph has yet to be verified.

William Robinson and his wife Matilda came to Tippecanoe County in the early 1800's. Their 1830 farmhouse was reportedly another silent witness to two migrations: one that of

the Potawatomi Indians on the forced "Trail of Death" to Kansas on the Logansport-LaGrange State Road crossing their farm; the second that of escaping slaves on the quest to



freedom in the North on the Underground Railroad. Both William and his brother John, who lived in a neighboring house northwest of West Lafayette and Klondike, are reported to have been station operators.¹⁵ John, when told of "passengers" in town, would hitch up his

wagon and pick them up. They would continue across the county line and travel north until reaching the shores of Lake Michigan, where the runaways were directed to turn right and follow the lake to Canada. Very few of Robinson's passengers were women because of the difficulties that could be encountered in traveling this route.¹⁶

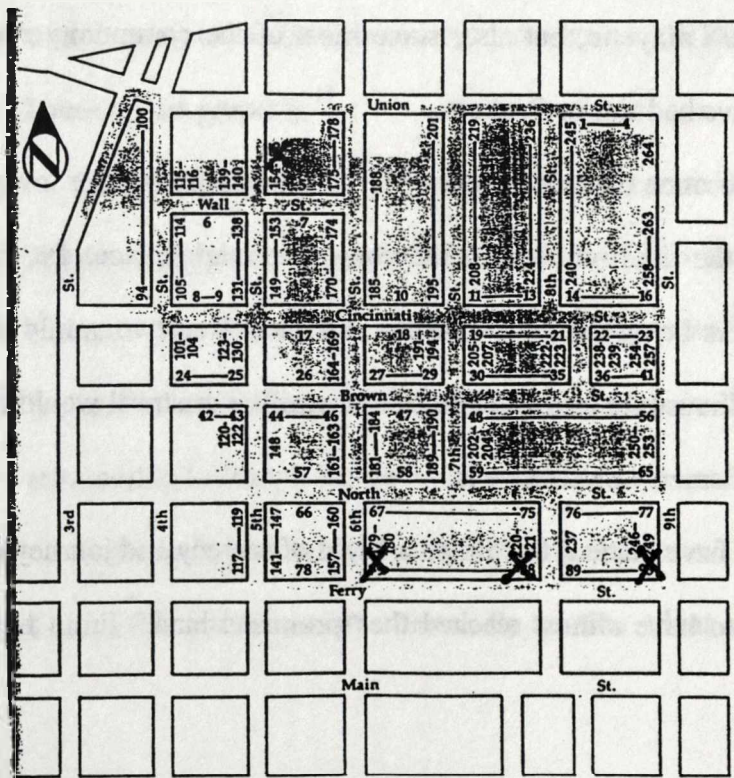
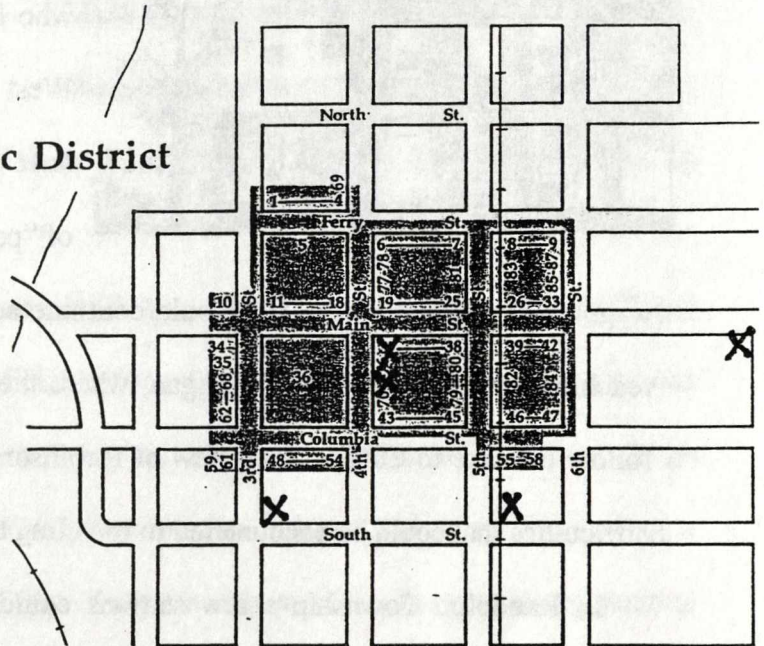
In Randolph Township a few stations could have been located in the budding town known as Romney. The logic behind this supposition is based partly on its location on the direct route from Crawfordsville to Lafayette, but also, since most of the community was from Pennsylvania, it may likely have had ties to Quakers.

The towns and villages of Tippecanoe County did not differ that much from other towns of Indiana. With the exception of the riverfront towns, they began as marketplaces for the surrounding farms, with storekeepers being the earliest settlers. A church or two would be built and perhaps be the first schoolhouse for a time. Perhaps a sawmill or gristmill would be built; a wagon maker and other craftsmen would move in.

But to many a fugitive slave, to have made it this far on a flight of secrecy and journey of desperation and anticipation, was to have almost reached the "promised land." From here

they would be escorted on their way to Delphi to cross northward to Niles, Michigan, then Detroit and the border into Canada. Or perhaps they would be led to Rensselaer and South Bend, where "welcome sight of prairies foreshadowed the freedom that would be theirs," or across the state line into Illinois and up to the shores of Lake Michigan and Chicago and later into Canada.¹⁷

Downtown Lafayette Historic District



Centennial Historic District

Woodblock print of St. Nicholas Hotel, Main St. between Second and Third Streets from "Historical Sketch of Parke County," *Combined 1874 Atlas, 1908 Atlas, 11916 Issac Strauss Centennial Memorial and Name Index of Parke County*

Photo Lewis Falley family from *Greater Lafayette - A Pictorial History*.

Photo of Lewis Falley from *Greater Lafayette - A Pictorial History*

Photo of Canal & Towpath from *Greater Lafayette - A Pictorial History*

Photo of A.P. Lynn House at the southwest corner of Main and Seventh from *Greater Lafayette - A Pictorial History*

Photo of Christian Keiper from www.rootsweb.com/~tippec/Bio_CBKeiper

Photo of Keiper-Biehn-Meade House at 603 N. 5th St. from www.historiccentennial.org

Photo of Reverend Samuel Johnson House 608 Ferry St. from *Tippecanoe County Interim Report* Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1990

Photo of Farmers Institute Academy from *Tippecanoe County Interim Report* Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1990

Photo of William & Matilda Robinson House at Co. Rd. 500North from *Greater Lafayette - A Pictorial History*

Maps of Downtown Lafayette Historic District and Centennial Historic District from *Tippecanoe County Interim Report* Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1990. *Numbers correspond to listings of historic structures noted in Interim Report.

¹ Bill Oakes, "Underground Railroad ran here" *Lafayette Journal and Courier*, March 7, 1976.

² Frank Keegan, "Slaves Sought refuge at Lafayette homes" *Lafayette Journal and Courier*, July, 1975.

Tippecanoe Public Library archives.

³ Fern Honeywell Martin & Paula Alexander Woods. *Greater Lafayette - A Pictorial History*, 1989. 43

⁴ Martin and Woods, *Greater Lafayette*, 117

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "The Underground Railroad in Tippecanoe County." No author or date listed. Tippecanoe Public Library archives.

⁷ "Biography of Christian Keiper," www.rootsweb.com/~intippec/bio

⁸ Correspondence with Barbara H. Dixon, current owner of the Keiper-Biehn-Meade House in Lafayette, September 7, 2000

* With a Quaker background on his mother's side, as a young man in his early college years, it might be said that Keiper was searching for an education when he went to Jacksonville, Illinois, location of Illinois State College. This school was presided over by Edward Beecher, brother of Harriet and Henry Ward and son of Lyman, whom Keiper may have met during his residence in Cincinnati. His arrival in Evansville may have put him in touch with members of the Anti-Slavery League as he traveled up the Wabash to Terre Haute. It is more plausible to believe that while at DePauw he made some connections with those who had anti-slavery leanings. During his practicing years in Alaska, he is known to have gone to New York often, graduating from New York Medical College in 1852. All of this supposition is also just that as no documentation can be found on Keiper, other than the general bio listed above.

⁹ "Churches of Lafayette, Indiana," www.rootsweb.com/~intippec/churches, 1

¹⁰ "The Underground Railroad in Tippecanoe County."

¹¹ "Churches of Lafayette, Indiana" www.rootsweb.com/~intippec/churches, 9

¹² "The Ghost Towns of Tippecanoe County" www.rootsweb.com/~intippec/ghosttowns

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ "Directory of Names of Underground Railroad Operators," www.ugrr.org/names

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "The Underground Railroad in Tippecanoe County."

¹⁷ Crenshaw, *Bury Me in a Free Land*, 27-28

VERMILLION COUNTY

The Miami Indians called the area "pe-auk-e-shaw." The French explorers translated this to mean *vermilion*. Both accurately described the red earth on the river banks seen by early explorers and French missionaries. Bordered by the Wabash River on one side and the state boundary on the other, the 37-mile long and 7-mile wide territory was sometimes called the "shoestring" county.¹

The earliest settlers arrived in 1816. Timber and prairie covered the area, with an abundance of coal and a clay that made terra cotta works very profitable. Vermillion County was established in 1824 with lands that were originally part of Vigo and then Parke Counties.² Agriculture was predominant in the region, with barns being the most recognized structures around. Water-powered gristmills and saw mills were sporadically spaced along the streams and riverfront.

The Wabash River was the only means to access the area before canals, railroads, and wagon roads came in with their covered and open bridges. Ferry docks were established at Newport and Perrysville in 1824 and by 1853 the Wabash and Erie Canal also went through Perrysville, making it a veritable center for trade. This ended with the closing of canal operations and the influx of railroads. The town of Newport was selected as county seat due to its central location and financial investments.

On his march to Tippecanoe to do battle with Tecumseh, General William Henry Harrison forded the Wabash River at Montezuma and marched up the Vermillion side, leaving remnants of a trail as close to the river as possible near the S. S. Collett farmstead. Some of his men returned to this area after the battle and staked claims to the lands.

French Catholics were among the first to establish religion in the area. Methodists and Baptists followed soon after and rural congregations flourished in small, simple buildings. The Society of Friends also settled in the area around Hopewell, Helt and Eugene.³ While Helt and Eugene were small, thrifty settlements, the one at Hopewell was not numerous enough to maintain regular meetings, and many of these Quakers relocated to other communities. It is doubtful that they had much activity in the way of assisting fugitive slaves to freedom.

No definitive record of any Underground Railroad activity has been found in Vermillion County, but there were reports of abolitionist ties and support for the Union being strong in some immigrant families. However, there were also just as many Southern sympathizers who saw their own economic lifeline as being tied to the South.

L. O. Bishop, of an early Vermilion family and editor of the *Clinton Argus*, wrote of being brought up in a family where the abolitionist issue brought stormy discussions. His New England native grandparents, Hiram and Sabrina Bishop, had indoctrinated his father Francis with a strong belief in liberty and a hatred of any injustice, especially that of slavery. His mother Malinda's had been taught differently during her early upbringing in Virginia. She later claimed to be of a newer understanding of the issue, which was discovered living in Perrysville and after reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Bishop wrote,

"That work of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe set the world ablaze with hatred of human slavery. Everybody in the Wabash valley read it, or read about it. Its influence was subtle, but permanent. All those earlier years the agitation against human slavery had been pushed throughout the North with all the vigor's of crusaders. The wave struck Clinton. Big, impetuous, sympathetic Hiram Bishop one day proclaimed upon Main street that from that moment on, He was for the abolition of slavery. The immediate provocation for the exclamation was the story of a slave-power outrage upon free-speech. The scandal spread like wildfire all over the country."⁴

Word spread that Hiram Bishop and another self-proclaimed abolitionist named John Cowgill were going to be hunted up by a posse and hung as "black abolitionists." A company of townsmen got together and sent out the message that this would not be tolerated.⁵

Needless to say the slavery issue was fueled after the start of the Civil War when whispers began about a mysterious group was being organized in western Indiana and eastern Illinois. No one knew who to trust and warnings of physical violence began to appear across the area, with mounted men riding over the country in the dark of night. When the name of the "Knights of the Golden Circle" was mentioned, it carried thoughts of being involved with Satan. These men were now thought of more bitterly by their neighbors than those who went to fight openly for the South.⁶

An incident in the town of Clinton soon gave notice to the Knights that they were to keep out. The proprietor of a local saloon at the corner of Elm and Main, who was rumored to be a sympathizer with the Knights, flew into a rage and when a young Union soldier in uniform passed by the building while home on furlough. The barkeep almost killed him. Rescued by his brother, the young soldier was avenged when the story spread like wildfire and during the night the saloon was literally smashed and the proprietor "roughly notified to get out of town and to do it 'd___d quick.'" ⁷ From that point on the Knights of the Golden Circle activities were kept to the southwest of the county.

Local legend has it that a reported UGRR station was located at a mill built by William Anderson in 1836 on the banks of Coal Creek in Helt township. Later abandoned when the stream that furnished power to the mill dried up, there has been no substantial record of its involvement in the movement.⁸

Another mill was built by John Beard at the mouth of Sugar Creek.⁹ While a William Beard is noted to have been a station operator in Vermilion County,¹⁰ this has not been verified. William, also listed as an operator in Union County, was not found to be related to John, nor even verified as having lived in the area. However, John was related by marriage to Salmon Lusk of Parke County.

It was often debated as to why such a small rural area like Vermillion County, and the town of Clinton in particular, which was so far removed from slave country and so geographically tied to the North, would harbor pro-slavery sentiment. This could be explained in the fact that the only door into the county was the Wabash River and the commerce of the area depended on the Southern markets like New Orleans that its flatboats served. When war broke out and trade was bottled up in the South, each of Clinton's 250 inhabitants (1860 census) felt it. But when elections were held and war summarily broke out, it was the Union that the town readily supported with its votes and its men.

¹ *History of Parke and Vermillion Counties Indiana*. (Indianapolis. B.F. Bowen & Company, 1913) 228

² *Ibid.* 249

³ *Ibid.* 303

⁴ *Ibid.* 270

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 273

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.* 410

⁹ "Historical Sketch of Parke County," 91

¹⁰ "Directory of Names of Underground Railroad Operators." www.ugrr.org/names/map-in

VIGO COUNTY

In February, 1818, the General Assembly of the State of Indiana decreed that a county be formed from the northern portion of Sullivan County encompassing the vicinity of Fort Harrison and extending westward to the state boundary with Illinois and including the Wabash River. This county was to be named Vigo in honor of Col. Francis Vigo. An Italian by birth and later naturalized as an American citizen, Vigo had supplied George Rogers Clark with invaluable information, money and materials and proved to be of extraordinary service during the Revolutionary War.

Selected as county seat was a growing riverfront area first explored around 1720. White settlers moved in with the construction of Fort Harrison in 1811 and word of fertile nature of the river valley spread and by 1816 the city of Terre Haute began, named for the French translation of its "firm ground."

Land speculator Joseph Kitchell marketed 30,000 acres south of the fort to the proprietors of the Terre Haute Land Company: Jonathon Lindley, Cuthbert and Thomas Bullitt, Hyacinth Lasalle and Abraham Markle. A courthouse square was laid out not far from where up to 30 ferries a day would crisscross the Wabash River. In 1832 over 1,000 residents voted for incorporation and by the mid-1840s more than 100 businesses, plus churches, schools and a post office surrounded the square.¹

Farming, milling and pork processing were primary industries of the early times in Terre Haute. The first steamboat, *The Florence*, docked in 1823. The National Road in 1835 and the Wabash and Erie Canal in 1849 were followed by the railroads in 1852. Bridges crossed the Wabash River and its tributaries, fostering further expansion of the city.²

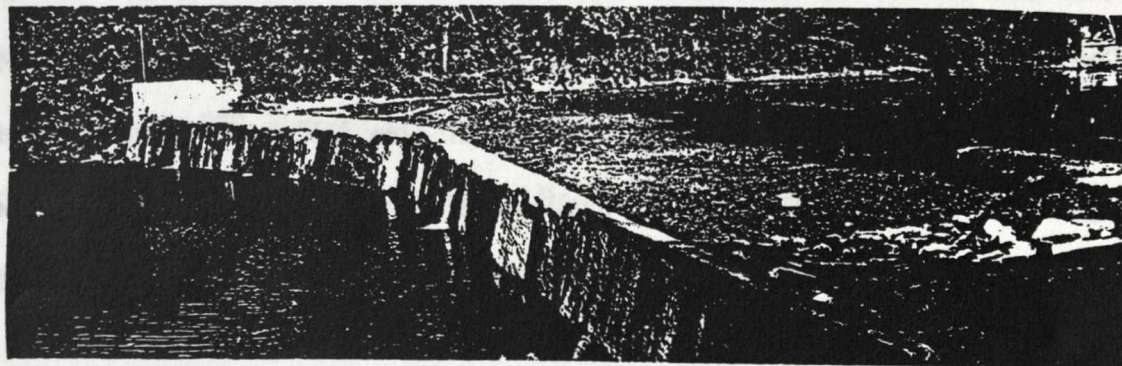
Terre Haute is a very beautiful town. A German and Irish immigration has filled up a part of this town, as of every one in the West. Pigs ornament the streets, and a part of the town is anything but attractive. But that which is occupied by the finer residences is very beautiful. The homes are surrounded by grounds and by fruit trees, many of them by beautiful gardens. The local pronunciation gave two syllables to the first word - thus: Ter-ra Hot. The brakeman on the train usually called out "Tar-hot."

letter from Lyman Abbott to his father-in-law, April, 1860¹

The Terre Haute Land Company held patents to 13 tracts of land from the banks of the Wabash River near Fort Harrison. These were later divided into shares, of which three went to Abraham Markle.

Born in America in 1770, Markle moved to Canada in 1806 where he became a well-respected land owner who was even appointed to a seat in the Canadian Parliament. With the outbreak of the War of 1812, Markle enlisted on the side of his native U.S., and after becoming involved in military actions against his former Canadian friends and neighbors, earned himself the title of "traitor," which caused the confiscation of all of his Canadian holdings.

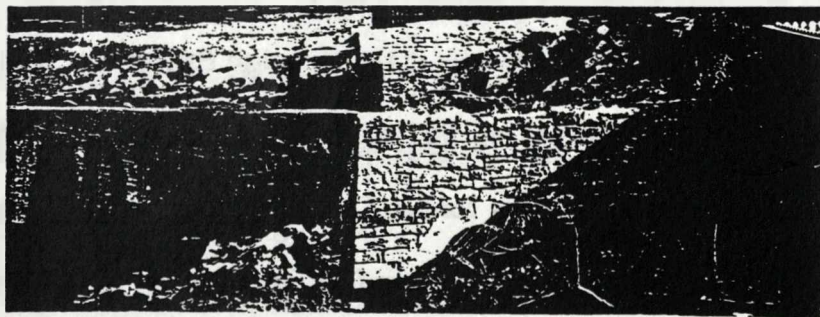
For his service to America, Markle was given 750 acres of government land which ran from the Wabash River east to Otter Creek. He gained a reputation as a hard-drinking, two-fisted 'rascal' who figured in at least two duels, one of which was with Major Chunn, the commander of Fort Harrison. Yet, with an entrepreneurial foresight, he saw advantages of



developing his holdings in this new territory, especially after the completion of a mill he had constructed in 1817. He later added a distillery, blacksmith shop and sawmill before his death in 1826.⁴

Son Frederick, born in Canada in 1809, came to Vigo County with his mother as a small child. Upon his father's death, he took the reins, expanding the mill, developing a stage coach line running between Terre Haute and Lafayette and constructing a new Markle House. He served as county commissioner for two terms. In the late 1830s Frederick and Ohio-born Sarah Denny were married by the Rev. Merrick Jewitt, pastor of the Congregational Church.⁵

The foundation of Markle's grist mill was of stone and the upper stories were frame.



Unlike other mills, the water wheel was not vertical on the outside of the building, and water was directed through a

spillway into the lower stone portions of the mill to a "splatter box," a horizontal wheel with slanted blades in a wooden casing. As water hit the blades, the wheel and the machinery was set in motion turning the grindstones.⁶

During the Civil War Frederick Markle served as a soldier and member of the war relief committee. The old section of Markle Mill was used to store ammunition for Union forces. There was also an organization in Terre Haute known as the "Home Guards," commanded by Frederick Markle and headquartered at the old mill. They held secret meetings, night after night, and men from within a twenty-five mile radius would attend. Closely guarded and with the mill's machinery stilled, a non-member took his life into his own hands if heard to be

approaching. It is doubtful that these men played a direct role in the Underground Railroad activities in Vigo County, but it is certain that they made it safer for some who were.⁷

The Markle family's original home was a simple frame house. In 1848 Frederick and Sarah rebuilt Markle House on the same site across from the mill with bricks constructed on site. Four-foot thick walls at the base, tapering to one foot at



ground level made up the exterior. Twelve fireplaces were strategically located throughout. An office for the mill was located at the north end with a separate entrance and view of the mill. North of the house was a frame carriage house with double barn doors. The house had served as a stagecoach stop and was alleged to have been a station on the Underground Railroad with a tunnel which ran from the house to the Mill dam.⁸

Frederick Markle died in 1865. His son William, born in Otter Creek Township in 1841, had helped his father at the mill from the age of fifteen, becoming a partner at the age of twenty-one, and taking over operations at the death of his father until 1898 when he quit milling. The mill passed through several other hands until the night of September 20, 1938, when it burnt to the ground leaving only the stone foundation, cement dam and ramp where wagons loaded and unloaded.⁹

In July of 1999, Hulman & Company, who had purchased the property in 1977, turned the site over to the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department for conversion into a public park. During clean-up operations remnants of a tunnel were discovered within the dam.

Documentation has yet to be found to verify the tunnel's existence as a possible service area for the mill or for any other purpose as most of the mill's records were lost in the fire of 1915.¹⁰

Markle House, one of the oldest houses still standing in Vigo County, was once owned by the Vigo County Historical Society. While the Society was able to list the House and Mill Site on the National Register of Historic Places, the renovation and upkeep were too costly and the Society sold the property, with protective covenants. The present owners have undertaken a journey of restoration and preservation of this piece of Vigo County's heritage.



The first Congregational minister in Terre Haute was Rev. Merrick A. Jewett, arriving in 1834 while on his way to St. Louis to found a parish. On a stopover in Terre Haute, Jewett was persuaded to preach on the following Sunday and soon encouraged to stay.

When over 50 pledges were received to build a church, he organized the First Congregational Church on December 30, 1834, as being one based on true congregational principles by Christians of different denominations coming together and constituting themselves as a church of Christ even though it only consisted of eleven members - six males and five females.¹¹

No pastor was ever more beloved and esteemed by his people and the community generally than Jewett and his coming seemed to be providential to those who heard him speak. He returned east for his family and took up his abode in the old Deming (also known as Meyer) house at First and Ohio Sts. The day after their arrival his son, considered to be a most promising youth, was killed by the accidental discharge of a gun. But even though his

active life's-work began in Terre Haute under such an affliction, from the beginning Jewett's success was assured.

During the twenty-five years of his pastorate it was said that he did more to mold the moral and religious character of Terre Haute than any other man. He founded and nurtured a church which, in its influence, the piety of its members, and their zeal in performing good works, has for long years stood prominent among those doing so much for the city. It was to this church that Rev. Jewett invited his friend and fellow pastor Henry Ward Beecher to speak in 1842.

Rev. Jewett was forced by ill health to resign on June 3, 1860, and he died in Texas on April 3, 1874, at the age of seventy-five. After his death, at his bequest, his remains were returned to Terre Haute for interment. While Jewett is not known to have spoken out on the slavery issue during his years at the pulpit, Congregational influences and associations with men such as Beecher and charter member Amory Kinney must have had some effect.

Amory Kinney was a native of Bethel, Washington County, Vermont, born April 13, 1791. The son of a Congregational minister, he had scant opportunities in the common schools before the age of nineteen, when he emigrated to western New York and settled in the town of Courtlandville, finding work in a cotton factory. The factory burned and, thrown out of employment, he quickly became elected as constable. While in this position he engaged in the study of law, and in 1819 was admitted to the United States bar. He journeyed west and settled in Vincennes, Indiana, where he took up the case of a young slave girl named Polly,



who was fighting being turned over to Hyacinth Laselle. [as noted in chapter on Anti-Slavery League]

From Vincennes Kinney moved to Washington, in Daviess County, practicing law at both of these places and along the Wabash River as far north as Terre Haute. In 1824 he became a member of the Vigo County bar and a permanent resident of the city in 1827. The next year he was elected justice of the peace, and also bought a newspaper from John W. Osburn. He was appointed circuit court judge by Gov. Noble in 1831, holding only one term of the court under this appointment before being elected to a full term of seven years. Elected to the Indiana House of Representatives in April 1830 Kinney also served in 1833, and again in 1847-48. The court of common pleas was established in 1852, and he was elected judge of the court for a term of four years.¹²

At the time of the end of his term as Vigo County judge in 1856, Judge Kinney was the last survivor of the early lawyers of the Vigo bar. For years he was the head of the law firm of Kinney, [Salmon] Wright & [Samuel Barnes] Gookins, leading practitioners in all the courts in a wide extent of the country. At the age of 68, his health began to give way and he returned to Vermont in the hopes that a vacation would help to regain it. Unfortunately, while there he suffered a heart attack and died in 1859.¹³



The Reverend Lyman Abbott and his wife Abigail left Massachusetts in 1860 to come to a city of 18,000 located on the extreme western border of Indiana along the banks of the Wabash River. By then Terre Haute had gained a reputation as an educational center, as well as a

railway port, serving a large industrial base. Abbott could clearly see through the muck and mire that Terre Haute was becoming a true "Crossroads of America."

A lawyer by education, Abbott had only been a minister for a year and on the promise of a \$1,000 per year salary Abbott felt a necessary call to move west. He arrived to take up the pastorate of the Rev. Merrick Jewett, who, since organizing the Congregational Church in 1834, had become one of the most popular ministers in this city of eleven churches (which does not include those serving the African-Americans or the Hebrew faith).

At the time of the Abbott's arrival in the Wabash Valley, the nation was on the brink of a Civil War and Terre Haute had become known as a stop on one of Indiana's three major Underground Railroad routes. The city's 'best people' were mostly from the Middle States of Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware, and Maryland, with a large influx from Kentucky. While Rev. Jewett had been a midlander from Maryland, Abbott was genuine a "Yankee," born in Massachusetts near the home of famed abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, reared in Maine and educated in Connecticut. His wife Abigail was the daughter of Hannibal Hamlin, a first cousin to Lincoln's 1860 running mate. Abbott and his wife quickly learned that being a "Yankee" was not considered a term of endearment and with only two New Englanders in the congregation, they began to emphasize their heritage as being based on the time they had lived in New York.

For a time Abbott kept his sympathies to himself in order to gain credibility. While he had already turned away from popular ecclesiastical teachings of the time by encouraging young women to further themselves through education, prior to the elections of November 1860, he would not use his pulpit to speak out on political issues, believing that a minister, especially one new to the city, should not publicly be a political advocate or candidate.¹⁴

But Abbott also felt that a "citizen is like a navigator who is separated from his fleet in a dense fog, hear[ing] whistles blowing in every direction, and know[ing] not which are warning of danger and which are calls to safety. The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 left the country fog-bound. A minority of resolute spirits in the South were determined to dissolve the Union and erect a new Republic with slavery as its cornerstone. A minority of resolute spirits in the North were equally determined to maintain the Union and restrict slavery, expecting its eventual overflow. But the great majority of both South and North were doubtful, perplexed, anxious: not knowing what to think or which way to look for escape from impending calamity."¹⁵

While many Terre Hauteans inwardly opposed slavery, they also felt abolition was impractical and there was very little visible anti-slavery sentiment. Many had strong sympathies to the South, but allied with the North for practical business reasons. After Lincoln's election, schemes of surrender, evasion and compromise were being discussed everywhere and on December 19, 1860, Abbott finally broke his silence.

Against the advice of friends and patrons, he preached a sermon focused on the problem of slavery. *The Crisis, Its Cause and Cure* was delivered to a packed church. His theme of "a divided country, one half of it free, is better than a united country, all of it slave" must have struck some nerves.¹⁶ While some newspapers published the sermon in full, others recognized it by giving it condemnation.¹⁷ The congregation lost a few parishioners, especially after the seceding of South Carolina from the Union, but gradually, Sunday pews began filling up and Abbott was lauded for his speech.

"Whatever might be the custom in new England, the people of Indiana were not accustomed to political sermons. Mine would be the first one ever preached in a Terre Haute church. In fact, so far as I know, I was the only

*minister in the town who dealt with slavery at all in the pulpit throughout the Civil War. The people of Terre Haute were loyal; but many of them were Southern in their origin and in their sympathies, and would resent any anti-slavery utterances....The church was crowded; the Republican paper published the sermon in full. And even the Southern Democratic paper granted to its spirit a qualified commendation."*¹⁸

During the war years in Terre Haute, Abbott was a very visible influence on the divided population of the city. He became a counselor for the opposing views of Loyalists and Butternuts (as secession sympathizers were called) when each wanted separate Fourth of July celebrations. To keep the youths of the city occupied and off the streets on Sundays, he formed the Union Rifles Sunday School. Membership was rewarded and soon the group numbered 150. When word reached the city that John Hunt Morgan's Confederate troops were in the southern part of the state, he joined the Loyal League - a secret society. And above all, he counseled the families of those who had lost family members to the war. But keeping in mind how newspaper publisher Elijah Lovejoy had been murdered at the hands of a mob for anti-slavery utterances "next door" in Alton, Illinois, Abbott also vigorously opposed any violence against the Copperhead newspapers and organizations interspersed within the city.¹⁹

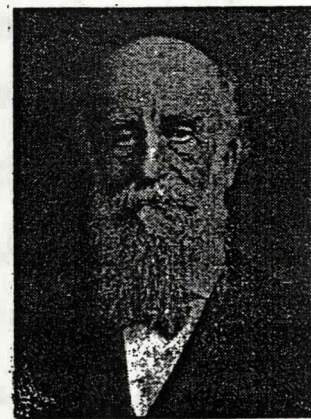
Like many ministers of the time, Abbott wrote for Eastern publications to supplement his salary. One such publication led to the next calling in his career. *The Reconstruction*, published in October, 1864, stated the maxim that "We must not only destroy slavery, we must also organize freedom."²⁰ At this same time late in 1864 President Lincoln was forming the American Union Commission (later to be called the Freedman's Bureau) to oversee the needs of former slaves and other war refugees. Embracing the tenet that Abbott proclaimed, President Lincoln picked the 29-year old Abbott to head the commission. Although the congregation did not want him to leave, seeing the greater need, they relented and in April,

1865, he preached his last sermon at the church on the corner of 6th & Cherry Streets and he and Abigail left the city. Unfortunately, Lincoln was unable to greet Abbott's arrival in Washington in person - on their way the Abbott's passed the assassinated president's funeral cortege headed for his final resting place in Springfield, Illinois.

Lyman Abbott had followed the anti-slavery teachings of mentor Henry Ward Beecher and upon Beecher's death in 1887, took up his pulpit at the historic Plymouth Church in Brooklyn. In writing an autobiography of Beecher, he found Beecher's supposed adulterous offense totally distasteful and just glossed over it, but did relate the story enough to expound on the man who had betrayed his mentor.

Abbott continued to pursue his journalistic talents, honed during his tenure in Terre Haute, and by the time he died on October 22, 1922, had served as editor of renowned publications espousing Christian and Congregational principles and published 13 books of his own.

Throughout his life, he claimed his time in Terre Haute gave him an insight to a credo that being a member of the clergy only in the Northeast would never have attained: "The preaching of a minister must be the expression of his own personal experience."²¹



The editor and proprietor of the first newspaper in Terre Haute was born in New Brunswick, Canada, in 1794, and came from a long line of gallant and accomplished British naval officers. John W. Osborn was instilled with a strong sense of the principles of right



from a very early age. At the age of 14 he followed his feelings of right and came to America landing in the New York town of Courtlandville. He took charge of the local newspaper and began expounding on the American ideals and devoted articles showing favoritism of the U.S. government.

In 1817 Osborn moved to Indiana, establishing the *Western Sun* in Vincennes, the first newspaper in the state.²² He took on the discussion of the slavery issue and through the *Sun* protested against slavery, defended the Negro and railed against the rights of bounty hunters.²³

With threats on his life, Osborn moved north to Terre Haute in 1823, setting up the *Western Register* and continuing to keep a watchful eye on all facets of government.²⁴ In 1828, when forced by ill health to give up his paper, Amory Kinney took over as editor,²⁵ but by the early 1830s, Osborn's name was back on a masthead — that of *The Ploughboy* in Greencastle. During his time in Greencastle he served as a trustee of Indiana Asbury University (now known as DePauw University).²⁶

In 1838, he moved to Indianapolis, taking his paper with him and changing its name to *Indiana Farmer and Stock Register*, where frequent contributions of articles to the paper were from the pen of Henry Ward Beecher.²⁷ At the outbreak of the Civil War Osborn moved to Sullivan, publishing a war campaign paper called *Stars and Stripes*. Osborn died in November 1866 in Greencastle, leaving a legacy as a pioneer editor in Indiana.²⁸

In the early 1820s, the only road from Vincennes to Terre Haute was known as the Vincennes Trail. A log house was built on a farm south of where a new town named Terre

Haute was beginning. This house was used as an inn for travelers and had a blacksmith shop attached.²⁹

Later in the decade, a brick house was constructed and its two levels were built up against a hill. A short secret stairway led to rooms under the roof, where runaway slaves were hidden. It was said to be the second brick house built in Honey Creek Township and the third built in Vigo County. Malcolm Steele, who purchased the property from a family named Jones, discovered the secret rooms when the outside measurement of the house failed to match that of the inside.³⁰

In this same area, a Quaker colony headed by Elder William Durham was established at Honey Creek, seven miles south of Terre Haute. It was here that Levi Coffin visited in the spring of 1823. At Durham's urging, Coffin was persuaded to stay and start a school and within two days they had a sufficient numbers of subscribers. Since these Quakers were farmers, the children would not be attending classes during the farming season, so Coffin also established a Sunday school — the first in Vigo County — to which children of other denominations also attended.³¹



Coffin left Vigo County in September, 1823, but the educational and inspirational values he left behind at the "Quaker Corner" in Honey Creek Township, particularly on the issue of slavery, played a fundamental part in the development of Vigo County's role of assistance for runaways traveling the Underground Railroad.

George Dewees came to Terre Haute from the South. He built his home at 13 ½ and Poplar Streets in 1832 and let it be known that he did not care for visitors. His wife Matilda was an outgoing and friendly woman who wanted to show her new home to friends. When George threatened her, she filed for divorce, but disappeared before it became final. Rumors abounded that Dewees had killed Matilda and bricked her body in a space in the fireplace. Dewees was never charged in his wife's disappearance and he soon left the area.

The Preston House, as it was later known, was in close proximity to the Wabash and Erie Canal and was said to have tunnels leading from the basement, adding to a speculation that it was a hiding place for fugitive slaves. Supposedly there was a cave-in one night and a group of runaways died. Until the house's demolition in 1987, it was said that the spirits of the slaves sung hymns mixed with shouts from Matilda in cries to be set free, lending to the legend of the Preston House being the most haunted in the city of Terre Haute.³²

In 1815 an indentured Armistead Stewart came to Vigo County with Quaker Danial Durham. Stewart married and reared a large family in the area known as Lost Creek. Sylvia Artis and her sons Isom and John arrived from North Carolina in 1832 and Sylvia signed the petition for the incorporation of the city of Terre Haute.³³

In 1827 Bowen Roberts set out on horseback to seek safe havens for himself and other Free Blacks in North Carolina. Arriving in western Indiana, he was impressed with the prairies along a creek bed known as Lost Creek. Upon his return to North Carolina he is reported to have said, "Fat hogs are roaming the forests with knives and forks in their backs."³⁴

A caravan of six families set out for this promised land. The Andersons, Archers, Cavises, Roberts, Stewarts, and Trevans purchased land from the government at \$2 an acre and began clearing it for cultivation while building log cabins for shelter. Wolves and panthers often prowled the area.

The Lost Creek Settlement included the northern portion of Lost Creek extending as far south as Maple Avenue, north to Otter Creek Township on the Rio Grand Road and part of Nevins Township. The settlement got its name from the creek that spread out over the prairies, but became lost because it had no outlet to the river.³⁵

Dixon Stewart was born in Wake County, North Carolina, in 1801. After his arrival in Vigo County in 1827 he married Lucinda Roberts, and they had eight children. With hard work and by being thrifty, Stewart amassed over 900 acres of land in Lost Creek Township, which he divided with his children, given 100 acres to each son and 75 acres to each daughter.³⁶

Jeremiah Anderson was born in Chattanooga County, North Carolina in 1806, and came to Lost Creek in 1832. He was able to obtain 700 acres in Lost Creek, which he also divided up among his children. Also handed down in the Anderson family legends was the story of George, whose house on Haythorne Avenue, one mile west of Hunt (also known as Stop Ten Road) was a Lost Creek station on the Underground Railroad. It is said that Anderson would transport refugee slaves who came into the community in a two horse wagon. The next station they reportedly stopped at was Markle Mill before going on to Bloomingdale in Parke County and further north into Canada.³⁷

Elias Lindley laughingly told stories of his "jined the bird company" and fled from a slave plantation in Kentucky, arriving in Vigo County by way of Gibson, Knox, and Sullivan

Counties and hiding among the African-American community in Terre Haute before coming to Lost Creek. He made his home with the Roper family, who were descendants of Native Americans in the area. Lindley hired himself out to the White farmers in the area and invested his earnings in to purchasing 200 acres in Nevins Township.³⁸

Religion was strong in this Free Black Settlement. In 1832 a log cabin (at East Old Fort Harrison Road and North Hunt Street) served as the worship site for Methodist, Missionary Baptist and Hard-Shell Baptist faiths. In 1840 Rev. Quinn founded the Lost Creek A.M.E. Church in a building first built of logs and then replaced by a frame building at North Hunt Street and Debney Avenue. It was rebuilt after being burnt in 1887, and in the mid 1900s Morton Lewis designed a new building which stood until 1975 when a dwindling congregation could no longer sustain it. In 1974 a historical marker was placed at the site of the church, attesting to the role that it played in the Underground Railroad movement in Vigo County.

In 1850 The Rev. Lewis Artis organized the Lost Creek Baptist Church from the Missionary and Hard-Shell sects. Dixon Stewart, Sr. donated the land for the first structure, which was destroyed by fire in 1868, but rebuilt the following year.³⁹ Although its congregation also dwindled in size, the church is slowing growing again and in February, 2001, celebrated its 151st anniversary in its present structure.

Henry Harris was said to be the earliest African-American to settle in Terre Haute. At the age of 19 he was given his freedom from a Quaker tobacco manufacturer in Virginia in 1809, and made his way west to Terre Haute. Nine years later he married a girl named Charlotte in 1818 and they had fourteen children. In 1840 Henry was killed on his way from St. Louis to

Vandalia, Illinois, with a load of goods. A man of good repute, Henry was held in high esteem by his neighbors.⁴⁰

Thomas Blake was born in Vincennes in 1820. Indentured to Fredrick Claycomb of Knox County when three years old, he served on a farm until the age of twenty. He returned to Vincennes and became a pork packer. In 1843 he married Elizabeth Cortwright, and they came north to Terre Haute in 1846. After her death in 1858 he married Loisa Sims. At the end of the Civil War, Thomas became the janitor of the public schools.

By 1820 there were eleven Negroes living in Terre Haute and by 1850 this number grew to be 227. Large families, immigration of emancipated slaves and the movement of African-Americans from rural to urban areas for work caused the number to increase over three decades. Many of the men found employment in the blast furnaces and rolling mills of the growing industrial town on the Wabash River. Women obtained work as cooks, maids and day workers in the homes of the well-to-do.⁴¹

As in any community, these African-Americans established churches which became the center of their circle. The first church organized in Terre Haute was Allen Chapel A.M.E. church, founded by William Paul Quinn in 1837 in a small wood-framed house at 717 First Street (on the corner of First and Sheets – now Crawford – Streets) near the banks of the Wabash River and just south of Courthouse Square. The charter members included Jethro Bass and his wife Polly, Nelson Bass and his wife Nancy, Juda Florence and William Johnson and his wife Mary.⁴²

The African-American population in Terre Haute at the time was 1,200, with an additional 180 in the County. They were so interested in having a place of worship that they would often walk three or four miles carrying hickory torches to light their way. Rev. Quinn,

a circuit riding preacher, would cross the state, sometimes walking all the way from Richmond to preach and only receiving \$1.25 for his service.⁴³

First known as the African Church, Allen Chapel became a major stop on the Underground Railroad for those slaves using the nearby Wabash River from Evansville and Vincennes before continuing on their way to freedom further North to Lafayette, South Bend and into Michigan and Canada. Its location near the river's edge and being nestled among the houses of the African-Americans living and working in the city made it an easy point for fugitive slaves to find food and shelter before blending into the community or moving further north.

Since education for Black children was prohibited in public schools until after the Civil War, subscription schools were the only way parents could secure a learning experience for their children. The first such school in Terre Haute was founded by Rev. Hiram Revels at Allen Chapel. Parents paid 25¢ per child per week and classes were held in the church building. Zachariah Anderson, a trustee of the church, was the first teacher.

Attendees of the church and school graduates include some remarkable members of the African-American community in Terre Haute, including firsts on both a state and national level:

- James Hinton studied at Allen Chapel before moving to a Quaker school in the southern part of Vigo County [Honey Creek]. Brought from North Carolina to Terre Haute by his Free Black parents at an early age just to study at the school, he went on to begin training to become a physician. He later abandoned this idea and became influenced



by Edward Roye. Hinton wanted to join the Union Army at the outbreak of the Civil War, but with no Indiana regiment to join, he persuaded Governor Oliver Morton to form a black Indiana regiment. He later became a recruiter for the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments. James Hinton went on to become the only African-American trustee of the Wabash & Erie Canal and eventually served as its president. In 1881 he was the first African-American elected to the Indiana legislature.⁴⁴

- Pickney Benton Stewart, (commonly known as P.B.S. Pinchback), was considered a fugitive slave although his father, Major William Pinchback, a white plantation owner in Holmes County, Mississippi, had given his mother Eliza and nine other siblings their freedom. Rather than face the possibility of returning to slavery after his father's death in 1848, Stewart ran.



His life in Terre Haute is sketchy, but the teen was supposedly introduced to Allen Chapel while working as a waiter at the Stewart House Hotel. Disappearing from the Midwest in 1861, he resurfaced at the end of the Civil War in Louisiana where he went on to be the first African-American governor in the nation in 1872.⁴⁵

- Rev. Hiram Revels and his brother Willis were circuit riding preachers for the A.M.E. denomination. While Willis chose to remain in Indianapolis, Hiram moved around the western part of the state, becoming a major force in the establishment of churches in Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri and Kansas. Born to Free Blacks in North Carolina in 1822, Hiram, along with Willis, moved to Indiana to obtain an education not available in the South. In 1845 he was ordained as an A.M.E. minister. While Revels stay in Terre Haute was brief, his legacy lingered after he established the subscription school.

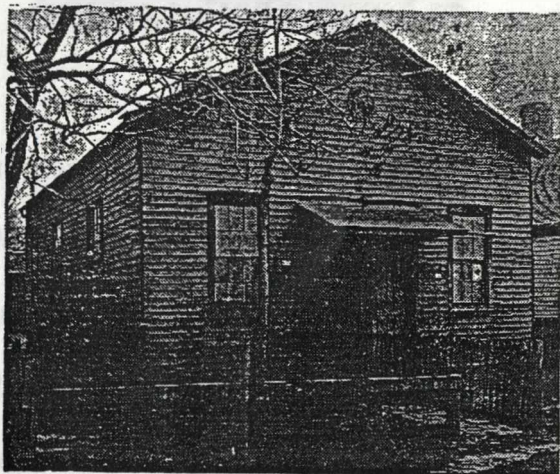
After the Civil War, Revels settled in Natchez, Mississippi, and began a sojourn into politics which led to his election in 1870 as the first African-American senator to serve in the U.S. Congress. Ironically, he took the seat once held by Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy.⁴⁶



- Nelson and Nancy Bass were married in 1832. Nancy, born in Sullivan County and Nelson, a farmer from Honey Creek Township, became acquainted through the A.M.E. faith before Allen Chapel was organized. They had nine children, of which only two sons, George Washington and Jethro, and two daughters, Angeline and Caroline, survived to adulthood. Jethro lived in Sullivan County and Angeline married Patrick Thomas of Parke County. While living in Honey Creek, Nelson and Nancy were robbed by four men who entered the house and demanded their money at the point of a gun. Unarmed and helpless they gave up the small amount they had, but were greatly affected for many years after as some of the money belonged to other parties. Nelson died in 1877.⁴⁷
- William and Mary Johnson were married in 1840 in Indianapolis after Mary arrived there with her mother from Bourbon County, Kentucky. William, also born in Kentucky, at Frankfort, came to Terre Haute by way of Cincinnati, then to Canada and Indianapolis. He was a traveling elder of the A.M.E. church and member of the Masonic order and temperance society.⁴⁸

For many years Allen Chapel was the only African-American church in Vigo County. It is noted for its church bell, which is larger than a normal church bell. The bell came from the

first County Courthouse, built in 1819 and torn down in 1866. When the U.S. government settled its account with Col. Francis Vigo's estate in 1876, as per a bequest from Vigo, a new bell was purchased for \$500 and installed in the new courthouse, built in 1887. When a search went out for the old bell, it was found that it had been loaned to Allen Chapel by Judge William D. Mack.⁴⁹



Allen Chapel held a spot as THE cultural center for African-Americans in Vigo County for many years. Frederick Douglass came to the city on March 11, 1868, to raise funds to build a new church. Demand for tickets to his speech were so strong he agreed to return on March 19 to speak on "The U.S. Constitution," and "Self-

Made Man." Douglass had been scheduled to speak in Terre Haute in 1843, however an attack by a mob at Pendleton, Indiana, rendered him bleeding and unconscious, and he left the state, not returning until the Civil War ended. But Douglass noted that he had met several notable Terre Hauteans in his travels: Dr. Lyman Abbott, secretary of the Freedman's Bureau, the Hon. Hiram Rhodes Revels, and P.B.S. Pinchback, the first Black delegate to a Republican national convention as well as first African-American governor.⁵⁰



In 1870, Allen Chapel dedicated a new chapel at the northwest corner of Third and Sheets (now Crawford) Street. In March 1913 an Easter Sunday tornado destroyed the structure and

an ensuing fire from lightning destroyed all but a few pews and altar pieces that the congregation members were able to save. The congregation rebuilt its building, completing it in 1918 and becoming free and clear in 1946. The church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.⁵¹

Since 1837 Allen Chapel has produced some notable members to the Terre Haute community at large. When urban redevelopment took away its surrounding neighborhood along the banks of the Wabash, the congregation dwindled in size. The building fell into disrepair and was on the brink of demolition when a group of local citizens decided the landmark was too important to loose. Since 1997 a grassroots effort has raised money to rehabilitate the structure, now one of the oldest continuing congregations in Terre Haute's history. Programs relating the story of the Underground Railroad are now being hosted for local students studying Indiana history and giving them an "almost first-hand" look at what it might have been like traveling the trail to freedom through Vigo County.



Photo of Markle Mill Dam site by Berky Davis
 Photo of Markle Mill Remains site by Berky Davis
 Photo of Markle House from the Vigo County Historical Museum
 Photo of Rev. Merrick Jewett from First Congregational Church archives, Terre Haute
 Photo of Amory Kinney from *1880 History of Vigo County Indiana* by Judge S.B. Gookins
 Photo of Lyman Abbott in 1860 from First Congregational Church archives, Terre Haute
 Photo of Lyman Abbott, later years from "Wabash Valley Profile: Dr. Lyman Abbott" by Michael McCormick
Terre Haute Tribune-Star
 Photo of John W. Osborn from *1880 History of Vigo County Indiana* by Judge S.B. Gookins
 Photo of Levi Coffin from "Wabash Valley Profiles: Levi Coffin" by Michael McCormick *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*
 Photo of James Hinton from *Indiana's African-American Heritage* by Wilma Gibbs, Ed.
 Photo of P.B.S. Pinchback from <http://sec.state.la.us/46.html>
 Photo of Hiram Revels from <http://encarta.msn.com> Hiram Rhoades Revels
 Photo of first Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church at 1st & Sheets (Crawford) Sts. Courtesy of Mrs. Bettie Davis
 Photo of Frederick Douglass from *Bury Me in A Free Land* by Gwendolyn Crenshaw
 Photo of current Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church by Char Minette

- ¹ "History of Terre Haute" Vigo County Historical Society, www.indstate.edu/community/vchs/thhist.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Lyman Abbott, *Reminiscences*, (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1914)
- ⁴ Lynn Miller, "Markle Mill played important role in city's development" *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, July 26, 1999.
- ⁵ *Program*, Vigo County Historical Society Annual Dinner and Meeting, September 16, 1999.
- ⁶ Miller, "Markle Mill played important role"
- ⁷ "Home Guards Meet in Mill," *Terre Haute Tribune*, July 18, 1909. 10 [contained within paper written by Morton Lewis, Vigo County Public Library Archives]
- ⁸ *Program*, Vigo County Historical Society Annual Dinner and Meeting.
- ⁹ National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form. Markle House and Mill Site. 1977
- ¹⁰ Oral interview with Keith Ruble, Superintendent, Vigo County Park and Recreation Department.
- ¹¹ Judge S.B. Gookins, *1880 History of Vigo County Indiana*. (H.H. Hill and N. Iddings, Chicago, 1880)
- ¹² Michael McCormick. "Wabash Valley Profiles: Amory Kinney" *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: Minister faces slave issue," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed.
- ¹⁵ Abbott, *Reminiscences*
- ¹⁶ Michael McCormick. "Wabash Valley Profile: Dr. Lyman Abbott" *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed.
- ¹⁷ *The Wabash Express*, Vol. XX No. 2, December 19, 1860. Actual print First Congregational Church archives
- ¹⁸ Abbott, *Reminiscences*
- ¹⁹ Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: Abbott had great influence," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed
- ²⁰ Joe Polhemus, "The Congregationalist Celebrates 150 Years," *The Congregationalist*, Vol. 159, No. 4 Oct/Nov. 1999
- ²¹ Ibid.
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- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Blackford Condit, *The History of Early Terre Haute 1816-1840*. (New York, A.J. Barnes & Co., 1900) 133
- ²⁶ Gookins, *1880 History of Vigo County Indiana*, 174
- ²⁷ Hibben, *Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait*.
- ²⁸ Condit, *The History of Early Terre Haute 1816-1840*, 133

²⁹ Correspondence from Nellie Fillbeck Steele to Eva Nelson, WPA Writer's Project. No date listed. Vigo County Public Library archives.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Michael McCormick. "Wabash Valley Profiles: Levi Coffin," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed

³² "The Preston House," *Wabash Valley Magazine*, September-October, 1992

³³ John W. Lyda, *Negro in the History of Indiana*, (Indianapolis, Indiana Negro Society, 1953) 110

³⁴ Beulah Edwards. "History of Lost Creek Community." *Our Community Roots*. No date listed. Vigo County Public Library Archives.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Morton Lewis, undated paper. Vigo County Public Library Archives.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Edwards, "History of Lost Creek Community."

⁴⁰ H.W. Beckwith, *History of Vigo County Together with Biographical Sketches*. H.H. Hill & N. Iddings, Chicago, 1881, 365

⁴¹ Ibid. 115

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Frances Hughes. "Allen Chapel is a landmark for local Black community." *The Spectator*, August 14, 1976.

⁴⁴ Michael McCormick. "Wabash Valley Profiles: James S. Hinton" *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed

⁴⁵ Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: P.B.S. Pinchback: First black governor in U.S." *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed

⁴⁶ Michael McCormick. "Wabash Valley Profiles: Hiram Rhodes Revels" *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed

⁴⁷ Beckwith, *History of Vigo County*, 366

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Audrey Graham. "Significance of Allen Chapel History," undated paper on file at the Vigo County Public Library archives.

⁵⁰ Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: Douglass inspires audience." *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, no date listed

⁵¹ DHPA files.

WARREN COUNTY

As with its southern neighbor Vermillion County, Warren County is bordered by Illinois on its west and the Wabash River on its east. The county was organized in 1827 with the county seat sited at the riverfront town of Williamsport, although Independence was home to the first white settlers.



Warren County is blessed with a wealth of natural wonders, such as Fall Creek Gorge, Kickapoo Falls, Black Rock Barrens, Rainsville Bluffs, Kates Pond and the Williamsport Falls - the tallest waterfall in Indiana, located right in the downtown area of Williamsport.

Some of the country is rich with prairies, while other areas are rocky valleys. But despite all these natural beauty, the Potawatomi passing here on a forced march out of the state named the area the "Trail of Death."

No definitive record of Underground Railroad activity in Warren County was found. However, it is possible that people and events that were involved in the movement just across the river in Attica and other areas of Fountain County may have had some role to play in ferrying fugitive slaves into the county.

In 1853 Jonathan Crane and Issac Romaine, members of the Grand Prairie Harmonial Institute, spread their ideology from Osburn's Prairie in Fountain County into Warren County. They wished to continue their system of "do unto others as we should do unto us."¹ At one time prominent citizens who were known to harbor anti-slavery leanings, were known to have lived in the area around Williamsport. Edward Hannegan, Lew Wallace and Daniel Voorhees,² may have espoused their thoughts on the issue during their time there. The actual

participation of the any of these men in any UGRR movement in Warren County was not determined.

Photo of Williamsport Falls from "Images of Warren County" www.statelib.lib.in.us

¹ Thomas Hamm. *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846*. (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1995) 140

² Michael McCormick. "Historical Perspectives: Edward Allen Hannegan, Part II," *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, September 17, 2000

CONCLUSION

a reasoned judgement; inference;

the necessary consequence of two or more

propositions taken as premises;

a final summation.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

CONCLUSION

"....Agitation of thought is the beginning of wisdom...."

Correspondence from William Hayward to W.L. [William Lloyd] Garrison, describing a visit by Sojourner Truth to Silver Lake Kosciusko County, Indiana, October 1, 1885

John W. Fields

John W. Fields was born a slave near Owensburg, Kentucky in 1848 and later worked on the David Hill plantation in the same area. He moved to Lafayette in 1869 when he was twenty-one years old and was interviewed several times about his life as a slave. The last interview available was at the time of his 93rd birthday which he observed by strolling along the streets of downtown Lafayette. His shared reminiscences offer us a unique perspective on the life of a young slave and help us to understand why they were willing to risk so much to be free!

John was one of twelve children in his family. When he was six years old, his master died and the slaves had to be dispersed to settle the estate. Three 'disinterest' people came to the plantation and wrote the names of the heirs on slips of paper. These slips were then put in a hat and passes to all the slaves who had to draw one to determine who their new owner would be. John said, "I can't describe the heartbreak and horror of that separation. I was only six years old and it was the last time I ever saw my mother for longer than one night. Twelve children taken from my mother in one day." John and one of his brothers were sent to a relative of his master in the Owensburg area. Five sisters and two brothers went to Charleston, Virginia; another sister and brother went to Lexington and the remaining brother to Hartford, Kentucky.

The widow who received John, swung him up on the horse behind her and promised him 'all manner of sweet things' if he would come peacefully. Before he could realize what was happening, he was on his way to his new home. As soon as they arrived, her manner changed... she took him out to where there were a group of men burning brush and said "...see these men?... Well, you help them." So John relates, "at the age of six I started my life as an independent slave. From then on my life as a slave was a repetition of hard work, poor quarters and board." They had no beds, but bunked on the floor with one blanket. Often on a long cold winter night they would just sit close to the fireplace.

Their day usually started between 4 and 5 o'clock each morning. Then worked in the fields until it was dark, were given a meager supper and then talked until ready to go to bed. Some would read in the evenings if they were lucky enough to know how. John says, "in most of us colored folks was the great desire to [be] able to read and write. We took advantage of every opportunity to educate ourselves. The greater part of the plantation owners were very harsh if we were caught trying to learn or write."

As he remembered it, the law at that time stated that if a white man was caught trying to educate a Negro slave, he was liable to persecution which entailed a jail sentence and a \$50 fine. He went on to say, "We were never allowed to go to town

and it was not until after I ran away that I knew that they sold anything but slaves, tobacco and whiskey. Our ignorance was the greatest hold the South had on us."

Mr. Fields was not mistreated in his years as a slave, but he said the women often were. He told of one time when a woman slave was sick and not able to work as fast as the master thought she should. After complaining about her performance all day, he called everyone together that night and whipped her. Then he ordered one of the slaves to pour salt water on her bleeding back.

John was still working on the plantation when the Civil War began. Although the Emancipation Act which freed the slaves was passed in 1863, the slaves had no way of knowing about it. Therefore, he did not realize he was free until 1864. He and his brother immediately ran away to join the Union Army. His brother was accepted right away, but John was told he was too young and frail. After trying to enlist at four different places, he decided he was going to have to find work. He was finally hired by a man for \$7.00 a month...his first independent job. He was 16 years old at the time!

Author and date unknown

Found in the Tippecanoe Public Library Archives

For whatever reason Underground Railroad activities in West Central Indiana have been left unsaid for decades. It could be that when a country is attacked from outside, its people are more than willing to rise up to its defense. But a fight from within is not always something to be proud of. Such feelings, in addition to the fear of reprisal by friends and neighbors, may have lead to the secretiveness of the fugitives, station operators and conductors as they carried out their missions on a quest for freedom. The slavery issue caused a wide diversity of sentiment from coast to coast.

What is so unique about the Underground Railroad that it draws one's attention and interest? Is it because it was a national phenomenon that crossed the county, reaching across state boundaries, races, religions, social classes and various other causes which led to a period of strife and war? Is it because it was a cause that often pitted families against each other and turned friends into enemies? Or is it because very little was documented by the participants that it fascinates one into wanting to learn more?

It is all of these. Many of the fugitive slaves who actually experienced traveling the routes, perhaps finding the pain of recapture or the joy of freedom in Canada, *could not* read or write. Many of the conductors or station operators, who put their lives on the line to assist in the flight, *would not* record their activities out of fear of reprisal. Many of the structures and even some of the sites involved *did not* survive the decades of time. Even oral histories through generations, like the proverbial rumor passed around a circle, were often embellished upon each time one was told. Since the end of the Civil War, many authors have had to rely on previously printed research, the accuracy of which may be cloudy or questionable, in order to perpetuate their own conclusions.

The major purpose of this report is to open a passageway into an area of Hoosier heritage in West Central Indiana that was often overlooked. Most counties in the region seem to have made some attempts at significant verification of the one or two pockets of activity contained within their own borders. But, for whatever reason, much detail has not been given to show linking how freedom seekers arrived or where they may have gone. Without maps or clearcut signposts to direct them, the physical resources of the region – be they natural or man-made – become logical pathways on their journey. The distances our predecessors traveled in a time when no motor vehicles or interstate highways connected one place to another is surprising, but trying to connect areas that were, at best 15-20 miles apart, with proof, is even more so incredible. Even with what has been written here, there are still many pieces remaining to be found, but direct documentation may be next to impossible.

Organizations such as the Knights of the Golden Circle and the activities of the Copperheads and Butternuts have not been covered here and their activities should be considered when looking at why the historical sketches through out the region seem sparse.

The fugitives had to have had help along the way. Numbers of western Hoosiers who assisted slaves to freedom have been estimated at anywhere from a couple of hundred total to a one-to-one ratio for every township, especially in the Quaker communities. Some groups or religious sects have also not been explored. Activities of some Reformed Presbyterians and Wesleyan Methodists should be considered for the roles that they played in a fuller story on the region.

Railroads that traversed the state in all direction are also not covered. It seems unlikely that penniless slaves would have the passage required. Additionally, in the confined space of a train car, hiding would surely have been a challenge. Seemingly, the only feasible way they would have used railways is by accompanying UGRR conductors under the guise of servitude.

Economic opportunities in much of the West Central part of Indiana led to the outward migration of African-Americans from most of the region's settlements after the Civil War years and beyond. Their heritage or the story of their arrival may not have seemed important to most of those left behind, so such accounts were often hidden or denied in the eras of continued segregation and before the discovery of one's own roots became fashionable.

Many of the physical reminders of this portion of Hoosier heritage have been sealed, altered or even destroyed. Thus, showcasing the plight of those who desired a life out of bondage and how they made the flight to freedom in Canada a reality takes a large dose of common logic and a bit of imagination. At the same time assumptions of one's stance on the slavery issue could be wrong if solely based on their political, religious or fraternal affiliations.

Indiana is a state where rivers, roads and rails bisected borders to lead to physical and economic development as *the* Crossroads of America, and as such the path following the North Star through the Wabash Valley has been an interesting journey, but one in which a complete travel guide on the one "railroad without rails" has yet to be written.

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